

Liverpool Diocesan Board of Divinity Publications

No. XV.

ISAIAH:
THE PROPHET AND THE BOOK

BY THE REV.

A. NAIRNE, D.D.

CANON OF CHESTER

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NOTE.

THE Diocesan Board of Divinity have printed these lectures at somewhat greater length than was possible in delivery. I wish I were able to express my gratitude for this and other kindnesses by making the whole more worthy of their generosity. They have also added the list of books which was sent out with the notice of the lectures. I have tried to make this list representative rather than to approach completeness, and have only included books to which I owe much myself. Hence omissions which will be variously regretted. One of these I cannot refrain from making up here by referring to Matthew Arnold's memorable editions of "Isaiah of Jerusalem in the Authorised Version with notes," and "Isaiah xl—lxvi," both published by Messrs. Macmillan.

A.N.

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I.

ISAIAH OF JERUSALEM.

CANON FISHER, of S. Alban's, wisest and kindest of parish priests, had a well worn book which he had made for himself, Isaiah bound with the New Testament and the Prayer Book in one volume. He had used this through a long life of constant visiting in the parish. A better manual could hardly be devised, nor a surer means for learning Isaiah. For Isaiah, like all great literature, needs to be read rather than read about. To be properly appreciated it should be read aloud. And the repeated attempt to explain it simply to simple people, yet so as to open the deep heart of the author to the deep longings of sick, perplexed, and dying men, disciplines the intellect and demands continual preparation of study, prayer and meditation. Nor will vague preparation suffice : it must be concentrated on the particular book, and directed to discovering the actual sense

the words were meant to bear to those who first heard them. Except by the gates of fact and history no religious, mystical, Christian development can be reached ; the primitive sense does develop into larger truth, but it cannot be altered into something different from itself without dishonesty, or ignorance which is a form of dishonesty.

So, however busily practical one's life may be, it is necessary to give time and pains to real study if Holy Scripture is to be part of our equipment. Prayer, study, and ministry interact on one another. Prayer becomes formal unless both thought and out-door experience fill it with reality. Study proves itself fruitful in all ministry and especially in parish work : like Bishop Lightfoot, the sick and dying desire to feed on great thoughts, not conventions, and few can exercise spiritual sympathy by mere intuition. On the other hand the problems of contemporary life bring zest to study ; the intellect is concentrated by practical need on the questions that matter ; the lumber of erudition is sifted ; we learn to skip both in reading and in thinking, and a baffling point is often cleared up in a flash from a new duty which has been waiting for an old thought. Thus the

quarrels at Corinth set free S. Paul's philosophy of charity, and in the Roman imprisonment the idea of the one Church, the growing Body of Christ, emerged from his anxious care of "all the churches."

But method and proportion will vary. A professed student is confined to a narrow range and a laborious attention to detail. An active parish priest will work through Scripture, not to say theology, as a whole, and will treat it all more broadly. Dr. W. H. Bennett used to say that there are two ways of learning Hebrew, both scholarly. You may learn to read and to write it, going more and more patiently into the niceties of grammar, &c., or you may simply aim at being able to read the Hebrew Bible. So we may consider that there are two ways of studying the Old Testament generally, that of the professed critic and that of the "layman" who has many other things to occupy him; and each of these ways may be followed in a scholarly, conscientious manner. In the preparation of these lectures, I have of course tried to learn all I could from the great masters, but in delivering them I shall keep as far as possible to the larger lines, applying criticism so far as I have been able to digest it and make its fruits

my own, but avoiding minute discussion. There is, besides, one piece of advice we may draw for ourselves indirectly from Dr. Bennett's adage. Nothing will be so useful to any kind of student of the Old Testament as knowing even but a little Hebrew; and a little Hebrew, enough to read Genesis readily, and to check translation of Isaiah by comparison with the original, is to be gained without much difficulty. To seek it would be a pleasant pastime. No lectures, no commentaries, no handbooks of criticism, no devotional expositions, are to be compared in value. These touch us from outside and grow out of fashion; the sacred language becomes part of ourselves and never loses freshness.

But perhaps that is a counsel of perfection. If so, we English are fortunate above other nations in our Revised Version. All versions have their defects, and so of course has this. But it is a fine piece of work, marked by a high degree of accuracy, and inheriting from a long line of ancestors a noble style which makes the reading of it a delight and an education. The study of Isaiah should begin with the story of his times as told in the Book of Kings. The whole book should be read, not merely the reigns

of Ahaz and Hezekiah, otherwise the interest of the story will not be appreciated, and that is of the first importance. That there is a real story and that it is of thrilling interest, to re-discover this is the beginning of wisdom for the student of the prophets. Excellent commentaries, the excellent habit of reading the Bible chapter by chapter, laudable curiosity about sources, &c., have dulled the naive interest in the actual story from which all else must spring. All theology is rooted in history, and "Clio is a muse." Until we can tell the story with some artistic enjoyment we are not likely to do anything else worth doing. Read Kings through. Carry the recollection about with you for a day or two. Then set down your impression on paper briefly, and after that get some patient friend or class of pupils to listen while you repeat the narrative in your own words. When you find they hear you no longer patiently, but eagerly, you will be really fit to penetrate the divine mysteries of the prophets.

Another reason for reading the whole narrative from the accession of Solomon onward, is that Isaiah's work and inspiration cannot be isolated. He springs out of his antecedents, and is moulded by his spiritual ancestry. Without

Elijah, Amos, Hosea, without Solomon's temple, there could be no Isaiah. There is a sense in which he is more intimately connected with his predecessors than with his successors. He stands at the close of what may be called the medieval period of Israel's faith ; the spirit of that period attains fullest expression in him ; he is the Dante of the Old Testament. And that is also a reason for reading the history in Kings rather than in Chronicles. Kings was indeed composed somewhat later than Isaiah's time, in what—to carry on the analogy—might be styled the reformation period of Jeremiah. But the exilic author of Kings was near enough to the ancient days to understand them, and he has preserved the old tradition with little of its bloom rubbed off. He still shews us the past in its own colours. Chronicles, written at about 300 B.C., when the elaborate Levitical Law had long entered effectively into Israel's life and even dominated it, is very different. It is not that the Chronicler contradicts the facts already recorded by the historian of Kings, but he puts them in a new setting ; he sees every thing, as it were, from the door of the second temple where he stands with the ordered priesthood round him, and worships in the security

of a faith for which Isaiah had contended against an all but unbelieving people. This is worth insisting upon, for Chronicles (with Ezra and Nehemiah) is a prominent example of the potency with which a strong, clear, concentrated mind overpowers the imagination of generations. Who that author was we do not know. It is evident that he was in faith, taste, purpose, and character, exactly like his own hero Ezra. And ever since he wrote his book Ezra's view of Jewish history has been accepted by the world. But in Isaiah's time there were no "Jews" in Ezra's sense; Isaiah's Judah represented "Israel," and Judaism with its greatness and its limitations was as yet not so much as thought of.

One notable characteristic of the Chronicler is his attitude to the Northern Kingdom, Israel in the narrower sense of the term. He looks upon the revolt against Rehoboam as an apostasy of the northern tribes from the true nation. Judah remaining faithful to the divinely appointed house of David, was the people of the LORD; the rest were rebels, schismatics, almost heathen, whose history is not worth telling. This in the light of subsequent events is a natural view; but it is not the whole

truth, and it is not the view that could be taken at the time. More faithful to history, and to historical theology, is what Kings presents. There we see Israel as a nation throwing off the yoke of tyranny, and for a long while progressing both in civilisation and faith ; not deserted by the LORD, but disciplined and trained in conscience by the prophets whom He sends to them sooner than any like movement takes place in Judah. Yet in Kings too we observe, as we follow the actual course of history, that a deeper direction of things is going on ; the northern nation for all its charm and spirit is failing of its high destiny ; the quieter less progressive south is being prepared to take the lead ; the house of David is firm set in the affections of the people ; this romantic attachment is gradually revealed as more wonderfully in accordance with far-reaching purposes of God ; the temple is more uniquely sacred than at first appeared, it is a rallying point, an influence, a sacrament : till at last, in Isaiah's day, Israel falls, Judah rises, and by a great divine deliverance, is established and commissioned to carry true religion throughout the world. For Isaiah not only consolidates the hard-won faith of the Israel of the LORD ;

he also dreams dreams and sees visions of a future which it must have been as difficult for his fellow countrymen to believe in as it is for us to believe that he really foresaw it.

The prophets appear as reformers, professing to revive the ancient faith, not to declare a new one. And though there is no good reason to suppose that Moses elaborated the complete Levitical law, it is reasonable to believe that he was the mediator to Israel of the true religion. Yet when we reach the period of the prophets we find little sign of that true religion swaying the mass of the people. In the reign of Ahab, Elijah stood all but alone against a Baal-worshipping court and nation. It was almost as the first articles of a new creed that he established, on Carmel, and in Naboth's vineyard, the truths that the LORD alone is God in Israel, and that the LORD is righteous and demands righteousness in His worshippers. As regards the first of these truths, it is not easy for us to realise at once how modest the claim was ; not "the only God in all the world," but "the only God in Israel." It becomes a little easier when we restore the national name "Jahweh," for which we, following late Jewish custom and the Greek and Latin translations, have substituted

the title "The LORD" with all its Christian associations. It is one of the notable points in Amos that he does rise to the larger conception. The verse in which he expresses this most sublimely (iv. 13) has been suspected by many critics, partly because so large a faith seemed to them impossible even in Amos' time. The suspicion is not securely founded, but it shews how strong an impression is left on minds that have brooded on the Old Testament as a whole, of the gradual unfolding of the faith through the prophets.

Amos comes a long while after Elijah. Elijah prepared, and Elisha was instrumental in carrying out, the overthrow of the dynasty of Ahab. Jehu, who actually wrought the overthrow, also effected a reformation of religion, and fierce though his measures were, Amos himself is evidence of the real, though partial good that ensued. Amos appears in the reign of Jehu's great grandson, Jeroboam II, when Israel was at the top of her prosperity, too full of pride to comprehend the danger that imminently threatened from the advance of the world-conquering Assyrians. To Amos, a farmer in Judah, the word of the LORD came in the thundering march of those cruel legions. He was

divinely compelled to warn his neighbours in the Northern Kingdom that this judgement was at hand, and to call them to repent. To repent of what sins? He began his prophecy by a review of the surrounding nations, Damascus, the Philistines, Edom, Ammon, Moab, who were all in like peril from Assyria, and for whose "three transgressions and four" punishment was to come upon them from the LORD. These "transgressions" are described and there is little variation among them. All have been guilty of ruthlessness in warfare, the "frightfulness" which belongs to a low state of civilisation, an ignorance of the more obvious morality. We understand as we read, how far from a truism in Elijah's day that second article of his creed had been, that the LORD demands righteousness. But when Amos prophesied it had become plain truth for Israel. He continued: "For three transgressions of Israel, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof." But the transgressions are of quite another kind. They are the sins of a civilised and religious people corrupted by prosperity, viz. injustice or the feud of rich and poor, luxury and impurity, complacent unreality in faith and worship. Israel is by this time near akin to ourselves, and we in

England can appreciate the deepening and refining of morality which Amos aimed at in the article he added to Israel's creed : " 'The LORD is the creator and judge of all the world, and He will judge His own people with special strictness.' "

Hosea was contemporary with Amos, but instead of making like him a brief prophetic tour with one simple and stern message, Hosea was a native Israelite who continued to plead affectionately, passionately, with his own brothers till the terrible end came, the fall of Samaria and the destruction of the Northern Kingdom. In his unchanging love for his faithless wife Hosea found his knowledge of the LORD. The divine truth which he established was : " 'The LORD loves his people with a love like that of a husband or a father, invincible.' " He, too, called Israel to be just and merciful at home, and to be pure in life, but he went deeper. He is the prophet of the love of God ; of that profound and beautiful Johannine idea, true life is to " know God." Hence he is not content to say with Amos, " You think yourselves religious, but your faith is pride and your rich worship a sham." He added : " Your worship with its gross ritual is foul. How can the God who loves you, whom to know is the only peace,

be adored under the image of a lusty bull? ” Both prophets were standing for spiritual faith against what we now call materialism, but Hosea penetrates into all the tenderness and austerity of spiritual communion. It is impossible to read him without feeling how immediately he comes home to our conscience to-day even after all the centuries of the Gospel.

From the simplicity and sometimes almost savage rudeness of Elijah to the complex delicacy of Hosea, is an immense advance. The Northern Kingdom would not undertake the difficult reformation of habits and politics which he urged upon it. But how far this short line of prophets had led their people when this last failure cut them all off ! How substantially the way had been prepared in adventurous, romantic Israel for the work of Isaiah in Jerusalem !

Isaiah, son of Amos—he has the patronymic which distinguished the well-born man —grew up in Jerusalem during the reign of Uzziah. The kingdom of Judah lay behind Israel apart from the great world of movement and ideas. It had been small and comparatively poor. It had been also comparatively free from the blood and crime with which the hot life of Israel had

been stained. The house of David had been more like chieftains to their clan than imperial monarchs. The people had still been "cousins" to the king, and there was a real affection for this family, so that though one or two kings of Judah were seditiously killed, there was no change of dynasty such as happened so often in the north. The temple, always intimately connected with the king, had been a conservative influence in worship, and there had been less movement in either direction than in Israel. High places and image worship had been more innocent; on the other hand theological reflexion had not been stirred as it was by the protests of Amos and Hosea. Faith was crude, rather than effete; a revival might seem more hopeful. But now in Uzziah's reign the prosperity of Judah was marvellously increased, for the first effect of the Assyrian advance had been to remove the pressure of neighbouring powers from Israel, and the southern kingdom had found opportunity for expanding interests as well as the northern. In the second chapter of Isaiah we seem to see the lover of Jerusalem, not yet called to be the prophet, looking from one of the hills "that stand about" the city, and dreaming of its glorious destiny as the centre of

a new righteousness and peace to the world ; he expresses his dream in one of the prophetic common-places of the day. Then he looks again and sees beneath the surface of that brilliant life the same corruption that Amos and Hosea had seen in Israel ; injustice, luxury, unreality in worship, and a foolish cry of “ Thy kingdom come,” as though the “ Day of the LORD ” would be the triumph of Jerusalem and not her bitter judgement. And so he is led on to picture that day of judgement in terrible language as a day of humiliation and defeat, when “ the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low : and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.” And then, thirdly, he sees a restored Jerusalem rise from the ruin of former hopes, not triumphant but in its weakness holy : “ And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even everyone that is written among the living in Jerusalem : when the LORD shall have washed away the filth of the daughter of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgement, and by the spirit of burning ” (iv. 3f).

Such were the preparatory motions in the mind of Isaiah, and it is worth noticing that a threefold process of like nature is often to be discerned in his later prophecies. The transitions from gloom to brightness are perhaps not so inexplicable as has been sometimes supposed ; there is a method in them. Only it must also be remembered that it is an artist's method, for Isaiah is a great artist in words, and it does not proceed by rigid division but with freedom and with subtle anticipations and repetitions; we have to deal with the changing moods of an impassioned mind, not with a logician's exposition of his theme ; and the introductory stage of illusive confidence is naturally not repeated in its simplest form. But, however that may be, this preparatory meditation was completed by the call to action of which we read in chapter vi. The ministry which thus began may be divided into three periods, corresponding roughly with three divisions of the first part of the book (i—xxxix). There is (1) a period in which the history of Samaria overlaps the work of Isaiah, and when Israel, in alliance with Syria, tried to force Judah to join them in resistance to Assyria. This corresponds with chapters vii—xii. Then (2) comes the time just after the death

of Sargon when the nations round Judah thought to take advantage of the unsettlement of the Assyrian empire and assert their freedom. This corresponds with the "burdens" of the nations in chapters xiii—xxvii. And finally (3) there is the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib and the great deliverance, which corresponds with chapters xxviii—xxxv. A narrative of the deliverance is appended which is partly given in the same words as in Kings.

It is obvious that this narrative is no part of Isaiah's "prophecy," and quite a brief examination of the earlier chapters will raise the question whether they do not contain passages which were never meant to be taken as part of Isaiah's own words. For instance, it will be noticed that each division ends with a kind of hymn, which reminds us first of the "New Song" group of psalms in the Psalter, and then makes us think how our readings from the Old and New Testament are completed in daily worship by liturgical hymns: *Te Deum*, *Magnificat*, &c. And when once that hint has been received, we look with a new mind at certain other passages which seem difficult to fit into Isaiah's own story; we see that the alternative, Isaiah or forgery, is unnecessarily harsh. But with this mere glance

in passing let us leave such critical problems for the present, and returning to Isaiah himself, let us try to tell his story briefly.

He had brooded on the contrast between the outward prosperity and the underlying degeneracy of Jerusalem. He knew of the Assyrian advance, of the military efficiency and ruthless purpose of Assyria. He had been led by the Spirit of God, who influences meditation, to take an independent view of the situation, and to realise that the holiness of the nation and not its political greatness mattered, and that if they did not reform themselves God, their LORD, would bring about the required reformation by a fearful compulsion of judgment. And, with all this, the thought of the LORD, the God of Israel, as living, caring for His people, directing the affairs of men, really to be trusted and able to save but insisting upon righteousness, had sunk deep into his heart. Then one day, in the year that King Uzziah died, he had a vision which compelled him to indulge no longer in detached observation, but to come forward to save the nation. He saw the LORD enthroned as King in the temple. Majesty, mystery and an awful divine holiness overwhelmed his soul. The great angels of fire flashed and flickered

flame-like in the gloom. In his anguish one of them touched and purified him with the fire. The LORD Himself called for one to carry His message of fiery purifying judgement, a message harsh and unacceptable but with a profoundly hidden hope. And Isaiah, new born through all but death, undertook the commission.

Events soon shewed his duty. The burning seraphs re-appeared in strange transformation as the devastating Assyrians. But as yet the danger did not touch Judah, and Isaiah's first message was to bid the king, Ahaz, trust the LORD, and keep clear of the political intrigues which would involve him in it. But such trust, such "faith," was as difficult then as it is now. Ahaz was pressed by Israel and Syria to join their combination against the invader. They pressed upon him with force of arms. He rejected Isaiah's counsel, and escaped the immediate difficulty by calling in the Assyrians to protect him from his angry neighbours. This was just what Assyria always wanted. Then, as now, great empires preferred to gain tributaries, or to declare war, with some pretext of justice. But any small state that asked for Assyria's help did become tributary to Assyria, and, if afterwards the small state tried to recover

freedom, it was punished as a rebel. How fearful Assyrian punishment was, and how hopeless resistance was to her armies organised and disciplined in the utmost scientific efficiency of those days, may be seen by any one who looks at the bas-reliefs in the British Museum.

Isaiah understood what Assyrian help meant, and he knew too how little disposed the spirited Judeans would be to acquiesce in servitude. But he also looked forward and inward to a more lasting freedom than the politicians and soldiers comprehended. The first offer of safety in faith had been reasonable as well as idealistic. Judah lay off the main road of the Assyrian progress. Israel and Syria would soon have been too much occupied with their own difficulties to trouble Ahaz. But that chance was gone now. So he took up a plain consistent attitude for the future that remained. " You have sworn allegiance to Assyria," he said, " Keep your promise, be loyal vassals, trust the LORD now, and devote your energies to reforming the abuses that are ruining our life as a nation at home ; do away with the injustice and oppression which divides rich and poor, restrain luxury and make morals pure, and let your worship and faith be sincere ;

trust God who will never let you come to real harm if you are trying to do His will."

A prophet is sent by God, he can never be produced by the wish or design of men. His message is always in advance of his contemporaries, and they do not like it ; if he were listened to the prophet would perhaps be spoiled very soon. Isaiah found few to hear or understand him. He seemed unpatriotic because in a materialistic generation he cared for the soul of his country. So the intrigues went on and he could but declare what the result was bound to be. The Assyrian was irresistible. The little nations could never make head against him. Nor was it any use to trust to the rival empire of Egypt for support. Egypt employed these smaller peoples as tools and made them promises. But Egypt was just " Giant Sit-still," and did nothing for them in the time of need. In the " burdens of the nations " we have a series of vivid pictures of the complicated politics of the period ; the too easily roused hopes ; the gallant daring of the petty states ; the embassies from Egypt ; the mystery of that land of " the rustling of wings," and the swiftly sketched characteristics of Moab, Damascus, Philistia, or of Tyre the indomitable merchant city of the

sea. But all the pictures are lurid and terrible. Isaiah foresees the doom that hangs over all the actors in this tragic drama. And he regards them with disgust as well as pity. They are tempting his own countrymen to sin as well as folly. All this turmoil is contrary to the holy will of God. The approaching disaster is deserved ; it is judgement.

Judgement ; that is the truth he has now to make clear. The Assyrian is irresistible, but only because the LORD Himself is making him irresistible. He is the rod in the LORD's hand, His ordained instrument of judgement. " Ho ! Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation. I will send him against a profane nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets" (x. 5 f). The second stage of the threefold movement of Isaiah's inspiration is here seen. But the third follows. The judgement will be near annihilation, " Shear-jashub," " only a remnant shall return, shall rise again to the new life" ; so he expressed it in the symbolical name of one son, while " Maher-shalal-hash-baz," " speed spoiler, hasten prey," the name of the other,

signified the fearfulness of the imminent catastrophe. Yet he dwelt also on another symbolic name, "Immanuel," "God with us"; and it is only by a very drastic excising criticism that we can escape the strong impression left by these thirty-nine chapters, that Isaiah never lost for a moment the conviction that the LORD would be successful in His measures for His people's true salvation. However few were left, however low Jerusalem was brought, the people of the LORD would not utterly perish, but on the contrary they would be raised again to a new life of holiness, of glory such as the world cannot give, but which the world itself should share, in widespread peace and righteousness.

And the incorrigible disturbers of divine peace should be removed. The Assyrian might overrun everything as the bird-nester of the world, saying, "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom . . . My hand hath found as a nest the riches of the peoples; and as one that gathereth eggs that are forsaken, have I gathered all the earth: and there was none that moved the wing, or that opened the mouth, or chirped" (x. 14). He might even make the prophet's warning his own boast and

tell the men of Judah and Jerusalem that it was their own God, the LORD, who had said to him "Go up against this land and destroy it" (xxxvi. 10). But Isaiah's moral sympathy with God is not perverted. He saw quite clearly that the barbarous military cruelty of Assyria was enmity to the LORD. Perhaps he distinguished more sharply than we, taught by the Gospel, would wish to do, between that savageness as hopeless, and the sins, half intellectual, half moral, of Jerusalem, which were compatible with a wish to do right, and which God would cure. At any rate he holds to his hope for Jerusalem, and he proclaims the downfall of Assyria when the LORD has done with using Assyria as His instrument of judgement.

And as we go on reading we become gradually aware that the atmosphere is clearing. The prophet's conviction seems to be growing more definite that the great day is close at hand, and that it will be a day of forgiveness and renewal for the LORD's people, while on the other hand the sands of the Assyrian are running out. Cities and states fall before him ; he sweeps on towards the land of Judah, the LORD's own chosen abode on earth. When he reaches that land and is about to put the crown upon all

his conquests, then "the LORD will strike in." This is an impression such as comes upon men, it is said, at the turning point in battle, or in storms at sea. Selected quotations would hardly serve to substantiate it. All who read continuously feel it. It witnesses to the fine art with which the book has been composed. It implies that a certain improvement was taking place in the king and the people. The only allusion in the book itself to such an alteration is the ambiguous one in chapter xxii. 15-25, where we read of a change of prime ministers which gave Isaiah a grim satisfaction. Whatever the hidden grounds for it, the prophet's intuition of an approaching conversion and deliverance was right.

Hezekiah was now king of Judah, and Sennacherib of Assyria, where Merodach-Baladan, of whom we read (out of chronological order) in chapter xxxix, was giving trouble. He was a chieftain who more than once seized Babylon, which (like Rome in another age) was the venerable and imperial city that fell under the sway of more warlike barbarian nations. At that time the Assyrian king claimed it as his own, but this Merodach-Baladan shook his hold upon it. This and other disturbances in the empire encouraged a western revolt. An alliance of the

small nations was formed. Hezekiah joined, and a prince who remained loyal to Assyria was held prisoner in Jerusalem. Sennacherib checked the seditions at home, and marched westwards to put down the rebellion. He invaded Judah, took cities, devastated the land, besieged Jerusalem, "shutting up Hezekiah like a bird in a cage"; but being diverted by a demonstration from Egypt, raised the siege and departed, exacting heavy payment. Then, reflecting perhaps that it was not safe to leave so strong a fortress at liberty behind him, he sent a letter with demands that meant the abolition of any kind of independence.

And now what Isaiah had longed for came about. Hezekiah took the letter into the house of the LORD. Like a child he spread it out for the LORD to read. He confessed his utter impotence and put himself absolutely into the LORD's hands to do with him as He would. "Then Isaiah, the son of Amos, sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, this is the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him. The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath

shaken her head at thee. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel . . . But I know thy sitting down, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy raging against me. Because of thy raging against me, and for that thine arrogance is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest . . . Thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria. He shall not come unto this city, nor shoot an arrow there . . . For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake " (xxxvii. 21-35).

A bold prophecy, which was fulfilled. The book of Isaiah tells of the Assyrian army perishing by pestilence. From the Assyrian records it would seem that a recrudescence of Merodach-Baladan's rebellion had something to do with the retirement. From these records it also seems possible that there was another, later, invasion of Judah by Sennacherib; and it has been thought that this would clear up certain obscurities in the Biblical narrative. It is not worth while to go into these details here. What

remains in any case plain is the great fact that after Isaiah had promised deliverance as revealed to him by the LORD, Jerusalem was delivered when destruction seemed inevitable.

This is the last event we have any certain knowledge of in Isaiah's life. He had seen all that he was prepared for at his call : the obduracy of Judah, the fiery judgement and the purification. The judgement was perhaps less ruinous than he had in earlier days expected. Yet the opening chapter of the book, which seems to picture, as in a kind of preface, the state in which Judah was left at the close of the prophet's ministry, describes a country brought very low indeed. Subsequent history shews that the purification was not so thorough or so permanent as it had been painted in the brighter forecasts ; and in what seem to be his last prophetic utterances, in chapters xxxii and xxxiii, a note of disappointment may perhaps be heard. Yet a disillusioned hope is the true prophetic hope, and the vision of the future becomes more real and is instinct with grander possibilities when the future recedes to a far horizon. And the concluding sentence of chapter xxxiii, has a word in it which is significantly new on Isaiah's lips, for hitherto his task had been mainly to

speaking stern things to an obstinate people, who at best cared more for deliverance from material peril than reconciliation with God : " the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

When Isaiah promised deliverance to Hezekiah he made a bold prophecy. His confidence might be explained in part by political insight, as his earlier promise to Ahaz that he would be safe if he simply kept quiet and did not meddle with Assyria at all, seems to have been sound statesmanship. But Isaiah did not offer Ahaz advice : he declared to him " the word of the LORD." To Hezekiah too he gave no private assurance, but " Thus saith the LORD." There can be no doubt that he believed himself to have received direct revelation from God, and the more exacting the criticism we apply to our records of him, the more we are compelled to admit that so it must have been. The political insight was there, but that natural faculty and the opportunities on which it thrived were taken up and used as instruments of a mightier Spirit which baffles our analysis ; these things were, so to speak, full of its fire. This Spirit baffles our analysis, but we understand something of its nature when we read the account Isaiah has given

of his prophetic call. And we probably understand this better if we have ourselves gone through some spiritual crisis, or have learned sympathy with those who have done so, whether by friendship with such a one or by reading the lives of men like Cowper and Wesley. For here again the ordinary and natural passes imperceptibly into the extraordinary. The inspiration of a prophet is a thing apart, and yet is connected subtly with the working of the Spirit in the hearts of other men. "All these worketh one and the same Spirit," and there is but one "Light that lighteth every man."

There is a paradox in this as in every attempt to grasp the whole of a spiritual truth. But the line of reconciliation may perhaps be discerned when we observe that Isaiah's call was a moral conversion. "Lo, this hath touched thy lips ; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." No one kind of sin is implied ; the Hebrew metaphor has a wide meaning. And no doubt Isaiah's sinfulness was chiefly that of the whole people in which he shared ; "and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." But the priestly man always confesses "his own sin and the ignorance of the people," and this conversion was entirely personal. And it

was tremendous. S. Paul could only describe the beginning of new life in Christ as coming through death ; and when we enter at all into the mind of S. Paul we are aware that there was little metaphor in his use of the word. S. Paul helps us to understand Isaiah. At his call his very being was rent asunder with such a shock as we can only conceive possible by some form of death. His whole course afterwards shews that his newly won life consisted in the absolute union of his will with God. There is his secret, indeed it is the secret of all the prophets ; his will had been lost and found in the will of God. Hence his insight into the future. It was not that his intellect became supernaturally clairvoyant, but his whole living and loving powers moved forward within the purpose of God, themselves contributing to the purpose which upheld him. Hence his courage and certainty in dealing with the social and political evil of his time ; and this was what the larger part of all the prophets' utterances were directed to ; prognostication occupied them comparatively little. We miss the lesson Isaiah teaches us if we think the rich men of Jerusalem were tyrants who delighted in oppression, or that the politicians of Jerusalem only cared for materialistic

ends. They were, no doubt, far more like ourselves ; men who would fain trust God and do right, but could not see the way clearly, and could not nerve themselves to a bold effort. They were entangled in the use and wont of complicated interests. Isaiah, from his call onwards, was freed from that entanglement. Neither he nor “ the children which God had given him ” were in the least concerned with their own interests. They could (to use grand language) practise idealism. They could (to use homely language) follow the guidance of the Father simply and from day to day.

Notice how significantly the phrase just quoted from viii. 18, is adapted in Hebrews ii. 13, and then think of “ Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow will take thought for itself ” ; the restoration of man’s freewill in the Gospel illuminates the mystery of prophetic inspiration.

But as with our LORD in the Gospel, so with Isaiah ; a one-sided view spoils all our reverence. Isaiah’s power sprang from a deep conversion. It was the power of a divine enthusiasm. But it is false mysticism which despises reason, and the more divine the imparted power the more it operates in thoughtfulness and serenity. Comparison with a contemporary prophet will

make this clearer in the case of Isaiah than much quotation and analysis. Micah the Morashtite, was a rustic prophet. He had been stirred to indignation by the sins of the great men whom Isaiah also denounced. But he lived nearer than Isaiah to the men and women who suffered by those sins, and when the call of the LORD compelled him also to speak and act, his denunciations and his hopes were like Isaiah's with some remarkable differences. A careful student of the criticism which has been expended on the Book of Micah is aware of the real difficulty in reading all the passages in this book as alike from the mouth of Micah. But it is pretty safe to express its general tenour as follows: To Micah Jerusalem is hopelessly corrupt. The Assyrians even would be less intolerable than the nobles of Jerusalem. Yet the country might quickly be delivered from the Assyrians if the simplicity of the good old days were restored, and thus the arm of the LORD were set free to work His ancient miracles. And such restoration shall come to pass. Jerusalem shall become a ruinous heap, and a true king of David's line shall reign beneficently in Bethlehem the city of the Shepherd King. And there shall be universal peace and holiness.

There is much here which Isaiah would agree with. Both prophets have an evangelic vision of the far future which is essentially the same. In detail, and at last, Micah seems even more precisely inspired than Isaiah. But they are not at one as to the nearer future of Jerusalem ; for Micah's expectation of the ruin of Jerusalem is a part of his prophecy which even critical readers are agreed upon. That such an inconsistency between two prophets should have been allowed by God and by the Jewish scholars who arranged the Old Testament, warns us against adopting any limited theory of inspiration. But the point we have to dwell on here is rather this. In Micah we see the prophetic spirit affected, to some degree intensified, by a limited outlook ; he is something of an enthusiast in the narrower sense of the word. But Isaiah is a statesman as well as a prophet. He lived in Jerusalem, dealt as an equal with princes. He was as sternly set as any one could be against the callousness, the boasting, and the feebleness of the men in power. But he knew too the practical difficulty of government, and, knowing that, he still believed in its possibilities. The powers that be were for him ordained of God. And in his broad, indefatigable mind the word

of the LORD grew with a generous complex growth that allowed no despair of this world. As in the Gospel so in the Book of Isaiah, we are in the presence of a heavenly Spirit manifested in an intellect of surpassing strength and patience : there is fire and there is also light.

This also appears in Isaiah's theology, in that faith towards God both of heart and mind, which became more and more capable of being imparted with clearness to other men. It was possible to sum up the theology of Amos or Hosea in a sentence or two ; it would be impossible to do that for Isaiah. To him that saying might be applied, " His faith was large and his creed intricate : in the house of his belief were many mansions." But we may simplify our study of it by making two main divisions : he believed in the Holy One of Israel, and in the Living God.

" Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts," was the hymn of the seraphs. The root idea of the Hebrew word is " separate." There is a real sense in which God is separate, different from man. We express the same idea in the word " divine." To us it seems mere tautology to say that God is divine. Yet most of us, if we examined our thoughts, still more if we

strictly tried our spoken words about God, would confess that our theology was confused by the limitation and often the perversion of the idea of God—His power, wrath, love, will—through human analogies too literally employed. When we remember that God was to the Israelite of Isaiah's day Jahweh, the mighty national Person, Jahweh of Hosts, the leader of His people's armies, we realise that such confusion was still more inevitable. To Amos the LORD was a Judge. To Hosea He was a Father, which seems more adequate a title. But Hosea thought of Him as the Husband of His people oftener than as their Father ; a person like a man, however far greater and better, is still the picture in Hosea's mind.

And then Isaiah came with this revelation of divinity. On this revelation a deeper reverence, a securer faith, could rest. And such a revelation must immensely enlarge the horizon of prophetic hope ; the purpose which is truly divine may well take ages to work out, and its consummation must extend far beyond the bounds of local and contemporary aspirations. Unless bold reflection of this kind upon the implications of the LORD's divinity be credited to Isaiah, we shall be continually stumbling at

sayings which surprise us by their universal tone. One reason, however, for still believing that Isaiah did thus speak is the figurative, obscure style in which at such times he expresses thoughts to which language had not yet been broken in. And again it is not unnatural that these thoughts sometimes burst in abruptly, are half uttered, and let go. Consider in the light of this suggestion—which is tentatively offered—the prophecy of one world-wide faith which in chapter xix is “in a figure transferred” to the names of Egypt, Assyria and Israel.

But the most impressive result of Isaiah’s doctrine of divinity, is his independent estimation of everything in the world, the new measure of the cross, as a Paulinist would put it. What most men count prosperity he rates at nothing. In humiliation he sees glory. This must not be exaggerated rhetorically. There is in Jeremiah an advance upon Isaiah. Jeremiah looked for new life in the utter death of the old body politic and religious; and so he carried the people of God past the destruction of Jerusalem. Isaiah saw Jerusalem delivered in her extremity, and found recovery when the sickness of the nation was only all but deadly—“the whole head sick, the whole heart faint” (i. 5). But

even with that caution we may find plenty of instances of this unworldly judgement in Isaiah. And what peculiarly characterises him is the keen insight—almost as though he saw with bodily eyes—with which he perceives God directing events when others perceived only chance or human effort.

That was what made him insist so strongly on the LORD's title of The Living God. To explain the epithet "holy" by philological derivation from the root that means "separate," and to leave it there, would entirely misrepresent Isaiah's conception. The "divinity" of the LORD brought Him nearer to men and their stirring pathetic lives than Amos or Hosea had preached Him. So in S. Paul or S. John, the Godhead of our Lord does not cut Him off from man, but is the cause of His including men in the Christ. War, politics, trade, the honour and faculties of great places, are to Isaiah instinct with divinity ; God is in these relationships of men. And so risks may be wisely run in accordance with God's will ; and there is no limit to the possibilities of such an office as the king's. But when, shutting their eyes to the real presence of God, men make as though they have to carry things on as best they can, life becomes

dull and brutal—like the Assyrians’—and is certain to be interrupted by a catastrophe.

And this is particularly to be noticed in Isaiah’s attitude to worship. There was much superstition in the Judah of his day, and his doctrine of The Living God seems to have lifted him far away from it: “Wizards that chirp and mutter! Should not a people seek unto their God? On behalf of the living should they seek unto the dead?” (viii. 19). He may adopt popular language for a special emphasis and say “Sheol hath enlarged her desire” (v. 14). It may have been possible for him to make an elaborate picture, as in xiv, of the shadowy ghosts grimly welcoming the shadowy king of Babylon among them. But it could not have been possible for him to speak seriously and religiously of hopeless death as Hezekiah did in his hymn. Whatever may be the last analysis of the prophetic doctrine of eternal life, such faith in The Living God as Isaiah’s whole ministry attests carries with it inevitably all that is morally essential in that hope. Or rather in that faith; for what we catch the gleam of in Isaiah is what S. John unfolds, a present conviction of life in God, rather than a hope of his own life’s recovery after death.

This, however, is a digression to a question which will be further considered in our third lecture.

Returning to Isaiah's attitude to worship in its tangible shape, we find him, like all the prophets before Ezekiel, on the puritan side. The Living God is to him very seriously real, and the worship of his day was, he considered, unreal in two ways. Much of it was trivial or unworthy, symbolising God through offensive imagery. Isaiah appeals to no recognised "commandment" against this, but he does seem to know that awakened conscience will be on his side, and he has no mercy on "the idols." But he feels more deeply what Amos felt. Religion without morality and without practical faith is mere "temple treading" (i. 12). For all this worship which is vitiated by a corrupt national life he has but a pitying disgust. Nor does it seem so much as to occur to him that through the ritual worship a sincerer faith may be awakened. The Living God whom he had seen in the year that king Uzziah died was employing more fearful means than ritual sacrifices to re-assert His presence and recover communion with His people.

Dr. Kennett thinks that the prophets were so entirely opposed to the whole sacrificial system that they looked forward to its being abolished ; that was in their eyes a necessary condition of spiritual religion. If this should be proved of Isaiah it would encourage us to look upon him as still more in advance of the mind of his age than we already do, and it might lead to a revision of criticism in many places. But for the present we must be content to think of him as acquiescing in much of the external fashion of his day, opposing the grosser superstition, always insisting on sincerity, but not so much interested in changing the form of worship as in making the heart of men spiritual. It is the same with the language in which he expresses his profound thought. He still uses the early, picturesque style. We may roughly distinguish three styles in the Old Testament corresponding to three schools of thought which, however much they may have actually overlapped in time, emerge to our view one after the other. We may call them the early prophetic, the deuteronomic, and the priestly. The first may be illustrated from the beautiful vivid narratives in Genesis, the second from Deuteronomy, the third from Leviticus. In the pro-

phets themselves we find an analogous development in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. All three schools are at their best grand, and each is distinguished by its own great manner of speaking about God. The priestly books tend to formal prose in language, and to make the fear of God the spirit of theology. The deuteronomic stand half-way between poetry and prose, and their distinctive excellence in style is found in the splendid rhetorical prose passages: these are the theologians of the love of God and they are somewhat careful to avoid phrases which picture God with human parts, though they do not feel quite the same scruple about human passions. The earliest school is perfectly naive and natural. We can hardly say they speak of God symbolically, for they have not reached the stage at which symbolism becomes conscious of itself. Their sentences form pictures in the mind. It might almost be said that poetry and prose are not yet distinguished. This is indeed language at its best, pure art unspoiled by philosophical reflection. And when one reads Genesis and the early prophets, it is difficult not to be contented with this as the finest instrument ever invented for expressing divine mysteries. Isaiah repre-

sents the culmination of the style. He has passed beyond its primitive naivety and uses it with magnificence, continually deepening our awe. Yet he is so bold in unpremeditated figure, that we are never tempted to rest in the phrase itself as an adequate description of things unspeakable ; his words are like sacraments and carry us beyond themselves, into the eternal.

That being so, an obvious caution is required in our interpretation of passages in which Isaiah seems to be "looking only for transitory promises," or to be clothing his theology in the ritual custom of his day ; or when he speaks of the LORD as though he thought of a national rather than of the one and only God ; or when he appears to imagine that Judah is so literally the land of the LORD, that were Judah to fall into the power of Assyria or the temple to be destroyed, He would have no place to dwell in, perhaps could hardly be conceived of as being still the Living God at all.

Questions are here involved which, it may be, never occurred to the mind of Isaiah ; and it is a century later, in Jeremiah's day, that these questions came forward. Yet he would be bold who claimed to fathom Isaiah's mind or to

set bounds to the originality which was the fruit of his inspiration. He used the old poetic style, and he used it frankly as a poet. The greater part of his prophecies are in measured rhythmic verse. Such writing always "half conceals and half reveals" the most daring ventures^{of} of a growing faith.

II.

THE GREAT UNNAMED.

IN chapter xxxix, we read how Hezekiah received an embassy from Merodach-Baladan, the tributary king who rebelled against Assyria, and how Isaiah rebuked him for his favourable answer, and foretold a day when his treasure and his sons should be carried away to Babylon. More than a century later this came to pass in a catastrophe which was greater than Isaiah seems to have foreseen. The Assyrian empire had disappeared. The Chaldeans were masters of Babylon, and in the reign of Zedekiah, the last King of Judah, Jeremiah's warnings being unheeded, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, took Jerusalem, burned the temple, and carried a large part of the people captive to Babylon. In Isaiah xl a prophecy, with no heading like those which in the earlier part of the book assigned prophecies to Isaiah, begins with, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your

God : Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned ; that she hath received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins." We read on and find that this unnamed prophet is in Babylon with the captives : that he bids them be of good cheer, the LORD has not forgotten them, and they shall soon be freed and return home. One who is conquering nation after nation is on his way to Babylon, which will fall before him, and he is the instrument of the LORD for working this deliverance. Then, at the end of chapter xliv his name is given. He is Cyrus, and he is hailed as the LORD's shepherd, and even, like the Hebrew kings, His " anointed," that is His Messiah or Christ. And after about fifty years of the Jewish captivity, Cyrus, the Persian, did conquer Babylon ; the Babylonian empire became the Persian, and the captives, we read in Ezra, did receive freedom to return.

Thus, in chapter xl, we pass from Jerusalem to Babylon, from the eighth to the sixth century, from prophecies bearing the name of Isaiah who urges repentance on a stiff-necked people to an unnamed prophet who announces pardon and restoration to a penitent people. How is all this to be explained ?

Some have answered : The whole book is entitled " Isaiah " ; the later Jewish tradition accepted by the writers of the New Testament—we have no evidence for our Lord's opinion on the subject—assigned these chapters to Isaiah ; we have no right to limit the miracle that might be accomplished through divine inspiration ; and we must suppose that Isaiah wrote these words for the benefit of a later generation. The change of scene, and thought, and style of language, the developed theology ; all this might make it impossible for the men of his own day, perhaps even for Isaiah himself to understand what he was writing, but that matters little if God chose it should be so.

But would God choose that it should be so ? There is a verse in the Septuagint and Vulgate translation of the Psalm we number xlii which runs to this effect : " I will cross over to the place of the wonderful tabernacle." The words might be taken to symbolise the medieval view of Holy Scripture, as though of a land of marvels where men and events were of another kind to what we meet with in ordinary life or strict history. The feeling is rather beautiful ; disciplined, it becomes the right devotional temper. But when once we have realised that the history

of the Hebrews is a true history of men of like passions with ourselves, we shrink from making this feeling a rule of criticism. In those days as in ours God worked His will by His presence in the common life of men. The more we follow out the signs vouchsafed to us the clearer we see that the analogy of inspiration is against this answer. There is perhaps no need to elaborate the argument. But let this appeal be made to those who value the gift of noble speech which God has gladdened us by bestowing on a few men like Isaiah and S. Paul. Would it not be a sad disappointment if this gift of style proved to be a shadow ; if S. Paul and S. John were to be forced by God to interchange their great distinctive tones of speech ? Those who have most admired the divine thunder of Isaiah's eloquence will hardly allow the possibility of his transformation and confusion into the author of these chapters.

Another answer is that the matter is very simple ; in any library manuscript volumes may be found labelled with some famous name, which prove on examination to contain first, some works by the man who bore that name, then something written by some one else which has been bound up in the same volume. This

explanation is too simple to account for all the facts. As soon as we begin to distinguish between parts of the Book of Isaiah written by Isaiah, and other parts written by another prophet we find that we cannot stop at the one broad division between Isaiah of Jerusalem (i—xxxix), and “The great Unnamed” (xl—lxvi). There are passages in the first part which do not seem to be Isaiah’s; others which, if they are Isaiah’s, seem to have been modified into something rather different from their original form; there are the narrative chapters with their interdependence on Kings. And in the second division a remarkable change of scene, temper, and often style, begins at chapter lvi which continues with so many further variations that we are compelled to ask not merely, “Is this not the work of yet another prophet?” but, “Is not this a collection of further prophecies?” Moreover the Jewish tradition by which the whole book is called “Isaiah,” deserves attention. This kind of tradition often proves trustworthy when we get back to its original form. Thus the ancient tradition about the Gospel according to S. John seems to have been, not that S. John “wrote” this Gospel, but that he was in a more indirect manner the

“author” of it. So with this book. The Jews may have called it “Isaiah” without meaning that it was written by Isaiah.

The only explanation which accounts for all that we observe is this : “Isaiah” is not a book written by Isaiah, but a book about Isaiah. It is what we might describe in modern terms as “The Life, Remains and Theology of Isaiah, edited by a member of the Jewish Church.” One advantage which criticism has brought us is that we have increased means for understanding the faith and activity of the Jewish Church after the exile.

We can no longer doubt that Job and Ecclesiastes belong to that period. We know that the Law, or Pentateuch as we call it, was not given in its completed form at Sinai, but represents the national development and, from the other side, the gradual revelation of centuries ; Leviticus, the elaborate law of sacrifice and priesthood, did not enter effectively into Israel’s life till after the exile. We always knew that Chronicles was as late as 300 B.C., for the book itself tells us so. But we now see the significance of this late date, and use Chronicles as a witness to the life and temper of the Jewish Church, and Kings as an authority for early

history. The Psalter is clearly, now that we examine it from a new point of view, a kind of "Hymns ancient and modern," the Jewish Church's book of devotion, containing perhaps very ancient psalms, but itself the combination of several earlier collections, and the psalms in it edited and re-edited, like our hymns, till they too reflect the deepened faith of this post-exilic Church.

For if on the one hand these books moulded the later faith and manners, they, in their turn, were sometimes modified thereby. The older parts of them received a colour from the society in which the Jewish Bible was being made. For a Bible is an "edition" of sacred books. The old books are collected and combined with newer ones. Titles and other aids to reading, especially to reading in public worship, are added. The Jewish Bible is the form in which we have received the sacred books of Israel, and it was an important step which the latest school of criticism took, when it recognised that the safest way to approach questions of authorship, date, and above all, theology, was to start from what the Jewish Church has given us. The Bible as it is to-day, is the Bible as the Jewish Church gave it forth. Let us put ourselves at its time and

place and try to see what that Church did with the material that was before it. If a more precise definition of the time be required we must admit that the forming of this Bible was a process, not a single act. The Law came first in Ezra's day. When S. Luke wrote his Gospel it would seem that the third division, The Writings, was still vague. According to the true text of Luke xxiv. 44, our Lord spoke of "all that was written in the law of Moses and the prophets and psalms." "Psalms" seems to stand instead of "Writings," and its inclusion under one article with "the prophets" points to its being as yet hardly a recognised division by itself, but only a kind of appendix to "the prophets." When that second division "the prophets," was formed, and when it became canonical, are two questions which admit of a good deal of discussion. But taking all the evidence together we may assume with fair security, that the composition of the Book of Isaiah was not much earlier than 300 B.C., and as so popular a book would be likely to go through many editions we must not deny the possibility of its having received important touches as late as the time of the Maccabees.

That possibility is of some importance. The Maccabean resistance to Antiochus Epiphanes'

attempt to suppress Judaism brought out the steadfastness and enthusiasm of "the saints"; persecution and martyrdom gave an impulse to the belief in life eternal. The Book of Daniel belongs to that crisis—whenever written, it was then intended to be read (see viii. 26, xii. 4, 9);—and it is in that book that we see the Messianic idea taking a remarkable development. All this, however, though culminating in the Maccabean struggle, must have been at work earlier, and if we refuse quite so late a date for the completed Isaiah, we may nevertheless expect to find these elements represented in it as well as others from the rich and varied faith of the Jewish Church.

That is the first point. The faith of the Jewish Church was rich and varied. The legalism which we find so prominent in Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, was but part of the whole. There was also the beauty and royal liberty of the devotion of the Psalter. There was the critical spirit of Job and Ecclesiastes. There was the after-glow of prophecy. And there was that development of prophecy which we call "apocalypse." We see this in Daniel; it is a far reaching vision of "the end," the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven. It puts the Kingdom

of God in the supreme place, and bids men have their treasure there, and (following the example of the prophets and saints of ancient days) take no thought for the morrow. It also brings in more and more the expectation of an anointed One, a Messiah, who shall be God's Son in a more wonderful sense than the kings of Israel had been ; or even who is already that, for this Messiah begins to be recognised as already with God in heaven, waiting for the great Day of manifestation.

The second point is this. The scholars who composed such a book as *Isaiah* were the flower of this faithful community. They were not only pious, but learned, broad-minded, sympathetic, both with the present and the past. They wrote their " *Life and Theology of Isaiah* " with hearts full of the large faith of their Church. They set down every thing in the light of that faith ; and recognising the continuity of revelation, they illustrated the prophecies of *Isaiah* by later work which seemed to them specially akin to his theology. *Isaiah* had been the prophet of deliverance ; a prophecy of consolation carried his primitive teaching further. Perhaps we might say that this was the central idea, round which they grouped all they collected into their book, the idea of consolation.

Let us look back upon chapters i—xxxix, and see how this hypothesis works in one or two places. Any one who reads Hebrew must notice the marked peculiarity of style in chapters xxiv—xxvii. But the subject also is remarkable. These chapters are about the end of the world, they are apocalyptic. The images and doctrines of apocalypse characterise them: earth languishing, sun and moon failing, the trumpet sounding, the dead arising. Then notice how another short piece of apocalyptic style comes at the conclusion of an earlier section (xi. 11-16), and how again the section xxviii—xxxiii is concluded by the apocalyptic chapter xxxiv. In each of these two last cases the apocalyptic piece is itself completed by a psalm-like chapter which may indicate liturgical use in public worship. All this shews thoughtful arrangement. The editor of Isaiah's "remains" has sifted them into chronological order as well as he could, and has completed each division by a fragment of later prophetic inspiration which carried on the antique theology by legitimate development and explained the deeper implications of Isaiah's doctrine to the mind of the later period. We may or may not think this the best way of doing the work, but it is at

least a way which is popular among ourselves. It is directed to just the same end as " devotional commentaries " pursue.

The seventh Article tells us that " they are not to be heard which feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises." The old " fathers " are the saints and writers of the Old Testament. We sometimes wonder how far it is really honest to accept that statement in the article. What we have just observed may be held sufficient to vindicate the character of the Book of Isaiah as a whole. But what of Isaiah himself? Did he look far beyond the present; did he in any real sense prophesy of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Gospel? The broad and truest answer is that he certainly did, since his whole mind was always set upon eternity, and the word of the LORD which came to him was a preparatory manifestation of the same Word that at last became flesh. But students of this book will be inclined to suppose that there may be even more than this; that certain chapters are " Messianic " in a more definite sense, and that the progress which these chapters display is the more striking in that it is a spiritual not a mechanical progress. Take the three passages, ix. 1-7, xi. 1-9, xxxiii.

Each are connected with the troubles of Isaiah's day, and in each there is a vision of the future which men then living might hope to realise. Yet the vision is of a very wonderful future, of nothing less wonderful than heaven on earth. When in chapter ix the awful gloom that has just been described is broken in upon by the promise of the reign of the Prince of Peace, is it possible to suppose that a mere earthly king, son or grandson of Hezekiah, is designated by those tremendous epithets? The analogy of Egyptian or Assyrian court phraseology hardly seems to apply. Such associations are just what the context forbids us to call to mind. In chapter xi this King appears again, but the picture is less distinct and less magnificent. On the other hand there is the grand quasi-liturgical recitation of the gifts of the Spirit with which he is to be adorned. All is quieter, yet profounder. And this movement from distinctness and magnificence to depth and quiet effectiveness goes further still in chapter xxxiii. Here the Spirit is shed upon the whole people, the connexion with the actual relief which may be expected when the Assyrian invaders have departed is more plainly declared, and the main promise of the passage seems to

be the practical reformation of manners which restored peace is to bring. Yet all is interpenetrated by an atmosphere of inexpressibly diviner yearning. The King is hardly mentioned, but when he is it is with those unforgettable words, "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty : they shall behold a land of far distances"—inexplicable words if no truly Gospel days were to come at last. It is as though the prophet climbed the hill of life, and as he climbed higher the detail of near vision passed into the misty vision of larger and better hopes ; till at last vision satisfied no longer, an ideal had been imparted to him that lay beyond even the far horizon seen from the peak.

All that is pretty, but is it founded securely ? Are these visions Isaiah's or only parts of the additional theology of the book ? In particular is Isaiah ix. 1-7 his, or is it, as some would say, a late piece emanating from the Maccabean struggle, when "Galilee of the nations" came into prominence, and the heavily booted soldiers (ix.5, R.V. margin) of Antiochus oppressed the saints ? Perhaps of this conjecture also we may be content to say that it is ingenious, but is it securely founded ? There is, however, another possibility. In the Septuagint, the most astonishing

part of the prophecy, the series of divine epithets in verse 6, disappears. In place of these we only find "angel of great counsel." May it not be that we have here an instance of the editor of Isaiah's "Life" taking what he might consider an allowable liberty with the record—perhaps itself already confused and uncertain—of his hero's words, and heightening them in accordance with the faith of the Jewish Church? Just that touch, the series of great epithets, would be an interpretation of the primitive Messianic language, in terms of the later development, which was legitimate development, not change. Such a touch would be hardly bolder than the alteration in the text of 1 Tim. iii. 16, "God who was manifested in the flesh," for, "He who was, &c.," not so bold as the insertion of the "heavenly witnesses" in 1 John v. 7.

And yet, is this conjecture well founded either? The Septuagint, with its merits, has this defect: it is apt to tone down the daring thoughts in which the Hebrew seers delighted. Is not this after all an instance of that toning down? Are not the great epithets consonant with that chord in Isaiah's heart which is all the more surely his because we cannot properly sympathise with it? There is a story of Fiona Macleod

which often recurs to me after long hesitation over critical problems like this. He tells of one of his West Highlanders to whom a fairy wish was offered. And he wished for power and wealth immeasurable, and then—"Give me instead," he cried, "give me a warm breast-feather from that grey dove of the woods that is winging home to her young." Fiona Macleod continues, "I tell this story of Coll . . . because he stands for the soul of a race . . . Below all the strife of lesser desires, below all that he has in common with other men, he has the live-long unquenchable thirst for the things of the spirit. This is the thirst that makes him turn so often from the near securities and prosperities, and indeed all beside, setting his heart aflame with vain, because illimitable desires. For him, the wisdom before which knowledge is a frosty breath: the beauty that is beyond what is beautiful. For, like Coll, the world itself has not enough to give him. And at the last, and above all, he is like Coll in this, that the sun and moon and stars themselves may become as trampled dust, for only a breast-feather of that Dove of the Eternal, which may have its birth in mortal love, but has its evening home where are the dews of immortality" (*Iona* : in *The Divine*

Adventure, p. 106). This analogy does not solve the critical problems of the Book of Isaiah, but it illustrates the soul of Isaiah. For Isaiah and the people he dwelt among were highlanders. Their dreams of empire and their dreams of the eternal were strangely mingled, or succeeded each other with strange abruptness, and it would be hard to set limits to inspiration on such a soil. Sometimes too it would be hard for readers of an alien race to trace the hidden lines, so different from what we would prefer to draw, along which their idealism runs out to its goal.

The "Comfort ye" prophecy has been called the Hymn of Monotheism. Monotheism means that there is no God but one, that God is one. That was not the faith of early Israel. "Thou shalt have none other gods but me," does not go so far as that. Even the *Shema*, the creed or battle cry of Israel's faith in Deut. vi. 4, does not go so far. "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD," makes for monotheism but it still has the limitation as well as the intensity of national devotion; what a distance there is between it and S. Paul's—"that God may be all in all." Elijah was content with establishing the truth that the LORD alone was God in

Israel. And vestiges of this earlier form of faith remain in the language, though not in the real thought, of the purest worship of the Jewish Church, as in the Psalter—"The LORD is a great God ; and a great King above all gods." To Isaiah the question had hardly occurred, whether there could be other gods who ruled in other nations. It is important in theological study to remember that questions only arise one after the other, and orthodoxy is of gradual growth. Yet Amos as well as Isaiah had no doubt that the LORD ruled and judged throughout the whole world, and when it was revealed to Hosea that the heart of God was love, the larger faith was not far off. The power of the LORD might be disputed, but the love of the LORD as he conceived it must gather all into one divine life. So too Isaiah's doctrine of the holiness or divinity of the LORD could not long be compatible with anything less than monotheism.

A great idea is not only prepared for in such ways : it generally comes to half-expression before it is declared in amplitude. There are flashes of intuition, aphorisms which anticipate logical proof, as in the Greek philosophers before Plato. Such an aphorism may perhaps be

recognised in that fine passage which we find in Amos iv. 13, "For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth ; the LORD, the God of hosts, is his name." The point of this is the same as in that chorus of the Agamemnon in which Aeschylus declares that whatever difficulties there may be in attaining to one satisfying definition of the universal eternal power who makes for righteousness and works salvation, he can find no name more fit to be filled with such perfection than the venerable name of Zeus. However that may be, the "Comfort ye" prophecy is the grand sufficient filling up of the aphoristic sketch in Amos. The required proof is produced. In this prophecy the epithet "righteous" has a special signification. It almost means "faithful." Israel's sorrows have been nearly enough to force the people to doubt the faithfulness of the LORD. But now He will show them that He is faithful. All history has been but the unfolding of His purpose. Now all men will see Him crown it with absolutely righteous effect. The whole world from Babylon to Jerusalem and the isles of the

western sea—the newly rising “classical” nations—will acknowledge that He is God and there is none but He.

The prophecy is a hymn, composed throughout in the style and measured rhythm of poetry, and its poetic phraseology is more impressive than the most carefully considered articles and confessions of faith. “Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span? . . . Who hath directed the spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? . . . All the nations are as nothing before him, they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? . . . I am he; before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no Saviour . . . I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God” (xl. 12-18, xliii. 10f, xliv. 6).

There are dark spaces in this faith as there always are when men are led by the Spirit from the simplicity of “walking in the way,” or leaning on the heart of God, to the intimate and perilous acceptance of His truth: “I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create

darkness ; I make peace, and create evil ; I am the LORD that doeth all these things . . . Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the saviour ” (xlv. 6f, 15). Yet the prophet does not forget the little ones of faith, and encourages them when in their childishness, they fear that the gods of their oppressors may after all prove too strong. Very different from Isaiah’s terse condemnation of the idols which Judah worshipped in his day is the gusto with which this prophet pours his sarcasm on the terrible foreign no-gods which are but stocks and stones, unworthy of attention ; the Jews may be as far from fearing as they are from the desire of worshipping them. “ The smith worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh with his strong arm : yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth ; he drinketh no water, and is faint. The carpenter stretcheth out a line ; he marketh it out with a pencil ; he shapeth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compasses, and shapeth it after the figure of a man, to dwell in the house . . . he planteth a fir tree, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be to burn ; and he taketh thereof and warmeth himself . . . He burneth part thereof in the fire :

with part thereof he eateth flesh, he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: Yea, he warmeth himself and saith, Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire: and the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it and worshippeth, and prayeth unto it, and saith: Deliver me; for thou art my god (xliv. 12-17).

Perhaps one simple consideration may help us more than pages of discussion to realise how far forward this prophet conducts us in this celebration of monotheism. In all the earlier prophets our recovery of their theology is seriously impeded by the substitution in the versions of "the LORD" for "Jahweh," but in this prophecy the restoration of "Jahweh" would almost shock us. Its author could repeat with us the first clause of the Nicene creed, and the Christian associations of the divine title do not disturb our participation in his earlier reverence. We feel how much this implies if we go back to Elijah. Reading the story of the contest on Carmel as we do in the English Bible, we are apt to have our attention distracted by modern reflections on miracles and the laws of nature. When we come to the slaying of the five thousand prophets of Baal we are perplexed

by the contrast with our Gospel training in the love of God. But read the story as it was written with that antique national name "Jahweh" continually recurring, and all falls into perspective ; we are back among the ideas of that long past age, learning the lesson of progressive faith ; and accordingly we appreciate with fresh delight the progress that does immediately follow when Jahweh reveals Himself again in the still small voice. To Isaiah of Jerusalem far more was revealed. Yet in listening to him too we are sometimes puzzled by unexpected turns of phrase or thought ; the restoration of the name "Jahweh" is what we need here also. Revelation was to him simpler, more natural and immediate than we can easily conceive it. We approach this intensity and simplicity of faith when we say "our Father" instead of "God," but that is an analogy which only helps our historical imagination to a limited degree : the associations of the two terms are so diverse. It marked a real progress in late Judaism when they felt the incongruity of continuing to use the primitive national exclusive warrior name of the God of the Hebrews, and set the example of substituting Adonai, "the LORD," for Jahweh. Only, as always,

something seems to have been lost when something was learned. The old intense conviction of the prophets was bound up with their inherited familiarity with him whom they so boldly called "Jahweh."

Of course we make that substitution in this prophet also: he too called God "Jahweh." But our instinct is right when we feel that he is beginning to use the ancient name in a new manner. He is a scholar as well as a prophet. It may be reasonably questioned whether Isaiah himself wrote out any of his prophecies: there can be little doubt that this author wrote his. He has carefully studied the words of his predecessor Isaiah: many of the coincidences and resemblances which have been appealed to for proof of their identity are recognised by a student of literature as being a scholar's debt to his master. He broods upon ancient history, carrying it back even to Abraham, and drawing theology out of the deliverance from Egypt more deeply than any one had done before him. He delights in other venerable names of Israel's God, such as "The Rock"; multiplies ringing sentences which echo the time-honoured patriotic religion; and breaks into the boldest imagery when he would give vivid expression

to the passionate affections of God. "I have been still, and refrained myself : now will I cry out like a travailing woman ; I will gasp and pant" (xlii. 14). Isaiah would hardly have liked to say that : on the other hand this prophet would hardly venture upon such a direct and almost coarse statement as Isaiah hurls abruptly at his audience in chapter vii. 20, "In that day shall the LORD shave with a razor that is hired, even with the king of Assyria, the head and the hair of the feet : and it shall also consume the beard." It is the difference between an orator telling the plain fact in the most forcible words that occur to him—look at the italics in the Revised Version and you will catch something of the ejaculatory character of the Hebrew ; you seem to hear Isaiah punctuating his utterance with momentary pauses while the inevitable words linger and find him—it is the difference between that and a scholar poet elaborating his thought with carefully chosen metaphor, &c. The later prophet states his message at large and lucidly, yet with something of a polished subtlety ; he is after all not one of those writers whom they may read that run.

And this is but part of a more far-reaching change that he is introducing into prophecy. There is a phrase in Hosea vi. 5—"Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets"—which well expresses what many must feel when they read the older prophets. They have a massive eloquence, and they pierce the conscience of us modern men whose politics, economics, and worship are touched with the same corruption as Israel's were. But we cannot read them uninterruptedly without being wearied, almost dulled, by their ceaseless denunciation. We turn with relief to Genesis or the Gospels. Remember the effect of contrast which Isaiah's one word about forgiveness creates (xxxiii. 24). So again in Jeremiah xxxi. 34, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more." But that was a promise for these very times of exile and humiliation; "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people" is the fulfilment of it. We mark the exact moment at which the change set in. Ezekiel, through thirty-two chapters of his book, "hews" in the ancient style. In chapter xxxiii. 21, we hear how a fugitive brought him news of the fall of Jerusalem, and at once he begins to "comfort." The change is divinely sanctioned, it is not arbitrary. This is the

actual difference between Israel under the monarchy and the Jewish Church after the captivity. When the nation was an independent political power, it sinned, but acknowledged no sin ; and the prophets stood alone, denouncing. When political ambition had been lost, the people still sinned no doubt, but they practised daily penitence ; the Law was in harmony with the conscience of the community ; and their teachers were commissioned to proclaim the forgiveness of sins, to encourage and console. The " continuation " of the primitive theology is largely made up of this consolation. The Church in her worship felt it would be untrue to the faith revealed in " the fulness of the time," if " I believe in the forgiveness of sins " were not associated with " I believe that he shall come to be our judge."

This consolation, this message of forgiveness, runs so perpetually through the prophecy we are considering that there is no need to illustrate it by quotation. Let us remind ourselves of one exquisite passage which will serve as transition to another point in our study (xliii. 24—xliv. 4). " Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am he that blotteth out

thy transgressions for mine own sake ; and I will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance, let us plead together . . . Thy first father sinned, and thine interpreters have transgressed against me . . . Yet now hear, O Jacob, my servant ; and Israel whom I have chosen : thus saith the LORD that made thee : and formed thee from the womb, who will help thee : Fear not, O Jacob, my servant ; and thou Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and streams upon the dry ground : I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring : and they shall spring up among the grass, as willows by the water courses."

" As willows by the water courses " : here is that rich and tender love of nature by which this poet has filled our memories with refreshment. He, like one group of psalmists, is ever singing the new song of a new creation in which the fair world we dwell in—" all things bright and beautiful "—is a sacrament of the promised life. " Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof ; the world and they that dwell therein ; Let the floods clap their hands ; let the hills sing for joy together ; Before the LORD, for he cometh

to judge the earth : He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity " (Ps. xcvi. 7-9). The coming of spring in the woods is the sign and pledge of the coming of the LORD. Jeremiah understood such readings of universal life, and this prophet concentrates them upon the one eminent hope of that dawn which he was heralding. The people of the LORD are to return, and their return is to be the beginning of a new life of perfect holiness and joy in unstained communion with God their creator and redeemer. " Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare : before they spring forth I tell you of them " (xlii. 9).

That word "spring forth" is one of his favourites. It passed into the vocabulary of Messianic hope as the "springing, budding branch," which by a curious transformation in the Greek version produced the "day-spring from on high" of the *Benedictus*. That is but one of the many familiar phrases of theology which we owe to this prophet ; they passed through the Septuagint to the New Testament, and sometimes it is necessary to recover the freshness of their origin. Thus "redeem" and "redeemer," which in the prophecy mean

“rescuing” or “delivering” and have little to do with “buying.” Thus “Gospel,” which is derived from the passages xl. 9 ; and lii. 7 “O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion . . . How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation ; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.”

And another theological word characteristic of these chapters is “covenant.” The ancient covenant of the LORD which seemed lost and broken is here shewn to be renewed and established for ever. “For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall my covenant of peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee” (liv. 10). That reminds us of the New Covenant in Jeremiah (xxxi. 31-34): “Behold the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah : not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers . . . which my covenant they brake . . . This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the LORD ; I will put my law in

their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it ; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." These last words describe the divine covenant in all ages. There was no new promise in " I will be their God, and they shall be my people." The new thing was that this covenant was now to be written " in their heart," no longer in outward ordinances. And it needs a steady effort of the imagination to appreciate the daring novelty of such an announcement at such a time. Jerusalem was on the point of falling into the hands of the Chaldeans. The holy city, the temple, the divinely constituted monarchy, sacrifice and all the regular ordinances of worship, would be swept away. Even for an Isaiah this would have been a staggering blow to faith. For the people it was what the discrediting of Holy Scripture, the removal of Sacraments, the abolition of Creeds, might seem to us. And in that dismaying crisis Jeremiah received and proclaimed a new revelation from the LORD. So far from this being the destruction of religion it would prove the deepening of spiritual reality. Stripped of all outward aids, and bound to God by the heart alone, His people would find their communion with Him more intense.

secure and glad, than ever it had been before :
“ And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the LORD : for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD : for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.”

It is no wonder that, in spite of the winning charm of these concluding words, the doctrine was too strong for Jeremiah's own generation. The prophecy of the New Covenant is the sum and crown of what he had been always teaching. And those who heard his teaching were ready to put him to death, as a bad patriot and a free-thinker. They appealed from him to Isaiah who had also been disliked and opposed in his own day. Jeremiah marks the necessary stage between Isaiah and the prophet of the exile. Now we find the profound unpopular doctrine of Jeremiah taken up, and glorified. From Chapter l to lv there is no talk of sacrifice, monarchy, priesthood or temple. Zion is indeed to be rebuilt and Israel is returning. But they are returning to a life with God that needs no outward ordinances at all. “ God is Spirit : and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth ” : there in brief is the

religion of this prophecy ; or rather, " religion " has at last passed into " theology," obligatory service into knowledge of God.

From chapter lvi onwards, there is a change. It looks as though the people had returned to Jerusalem, and some of this lofty hope had been disappointed. Sins and superstitions recur again. Nor has it proved possible to sustain this ethereal altitude in faith ; ritual and rule has been found still " necessary for secular-minded people," as Father R. M. Benson once put it. This illustrates what we find all through the prophets. They are idealists, and we need not be careful to protest against the popular sense of that word in their behalf. They do in fact, cherish an ideal which has always had to wait for a later generation to take seriously, and which has never been fully realised in practice but once. That once, however, is sufficient to assure us they were right. All their ideals and more have been seen fulfilled by our Lord Jesus Christ in the ordinary conditions of manhood on earth. It would seem that the Church's high calling is still to hold up ideals which are rejected as unpractical, and which really are beyond the reach of the generation in which they specially need proclaiming. To quote Father

Benson again, "We cannot see where Jesus dwells unless we dwell in the future, as a present already realised. We must come up to heaven, then we see that which shall be hereafter."

III.

THE SERVANT OF THE LORD.

IN spite of the general plan with which we started, it has not been possible to avoid critical questions altogether. But we should remember that such questioning is not an arrogant novelty of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was in the early Church that certain books of the New Testament were "disputed." One of the boldest of all critics was Origen. He drew a fine analogy between Holy Scripture and Nature, and said that we must expect to find like difficulties in each of these two books of God. They are indeed analogous both in their grandeur and their difficulties. There is the same complexity, the complexity of living growth, in each. But there is a unity also in this complexity. In nature we recognise the mind of God directly operating and harmonising the variety. In the sacred books art mediates, and we recognise the mind of the human author who gave to them

their final character and form. It is perhaps a pity that the term "redactor" has been so much used ; we get from it a false impression, as though the unselected, undigested fragments of antiquity were superior to the finished work. No doubt they have a peculiar value as documents for history, when and if we can securely recover their original forms, but the theological value of the completed book is generally of a higher order, and the person or the school, to whom we owe that, is more fairly designated "author" than "redactor."

All great literature owes much to artistic arrangement. The Book of Isaiah is undoubtedly great literature, and it is always wise to consider in perplexing passages whether abrupt contrasts may not be due to the author's masterly but not obvious arrangement of his material. These contrasts do not necessarily imply awkward insertion of late writing in the midst of earlier. Take in illustration the passage already referred to, Isaiah ix. 1-7. No one who has diligently studied the critical problem here will lightly dogmatise in either direction. But the abrupt change from chapter viii is not by itself a good reason for postulating insertion from a later prophecy. That reason has been

pressed. The contrast, it has been said, is as startling as it would be to find a patch of blue sky painted into the middle of the picture of a thunder cloud. That shews what a bad master the good servant analogy may become. Make one slight transposition of words at the the end of chapter viii—a suggestion once made by Dr. Cheyne, and surely not capricious if the vicissitudes of manuscript transmission be considered. Then we read as follows: “And it shall come to pass that, when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse by their king and by their God; and they shall look unto the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and into thick darkness they shall be driven away. And they shall turn their faces upward, for there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish. In the former time, &c.” This gives a sudden, but not an awkward, inexplicable transition.

The same observation may be made concerning one of the passages we are to consider specially in this lecture, Isaiah lii. 13—liii. This is grave, pathetic, and breaks with strong contrast into the exultant *Te Deum* on either side of it. The term, *Te Deum*, points to a fitter analogy than that of the picture of the storm-cloud. Fitter

in every way, for this prophecy of the exile is really like a piece of music, an elaborate concerted piece. And that being so, the grave movement is no mere interruption. It is to be welcomed as contributing depth and mystery to the really interesting development of the one but manifold idea.

More, however, remains to be noticed. This passage is the last of a series of four, all of which stand out markedly from the general context. The four passages are: xlii. 1-7; xlix. 1-6; l. 4-9; lii. 13—liii. They are lyric poems, "songs." They have a clear emphatic rhythm of their own. They celebrate a person who is called "the Servant of the LORD." This title "servant" occurs elsewhere, of Israel as a nation, and possibly sometimes with allusion to the subject of the songs; but nowhere else is this person directly introduced, speaking, acting, suffering, as in the songs. If there really are allusions to the songs in other parts of the prophecy, that would be an argument for considering that the author is one and the same throughout. We might compare the lyrics with which Tennyson punctuated the divisions of the "Princess" (adding them in a later edition). And the comparison is the more apt,

in that some punctuation of the kind is a help to reading the "Comfort ye" prophecy as a whole. It flows with so smooth a lucidity that, without such aid, the definite progress of ideas might be difficult to analyse.

There is nothing against this in the language of the three first songs, but the last (lii. 13--lii.) is different. The actual text is generally supposed to be imperfectly preserved in parts, but though allowance be made for this, we must admit that the Hebrew is difficult and obscure ; it is perhaps possible that some of the supposed corruptions may be better accounted for as extreme examples of an uncouth style. That epithet may be too strong. But at least the style is degenerate in the sense that much modern English may be described as degenerate in comparison with Elizabethan or seventeenth century English. The strength, clearness and beauty of modern English is inferior ; on the other hand it is more capable of expressing deep and complex thought. In like manner the fourth song is inferior in language to the rest of the prophecy of "comfort," but profounder in thought. A parallel from the Old Testament is to be found in Psalm cxxxix, "O LORD, thou hast searched me out and known me." The Hebrew

of this Psalm shews a considerable falling off from the great classical style. It is marred by the inroads of foreign influence. But the thought of the Psalm is philosophical and subtle to a degree which is rare in Hebrew. My own impression is that this fourth song is later than the other three and the rest of the prophecy. How much later I would not venture to guess. Nor is the possibility to be overlooked that this impression may be due to a mistaken inference from doubtful facts ; the state of the text forbids rash assertion. This, however, may be freely allowed : in enquiring after a historical background for the songs, the date of the last of them should be, till all else is settled, an open question.

But is it worth while to seek for this historical background ? Nothing is more certain than that we read here a prophecy concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. A friend of mine, not inclined to orthodoxy in these matters, told me how he heard Isaiah lii. 13—liii, read in a country church, in that quiet self-forgetting way which is happily frequent among our English clergy. And he said he felt that the upholders of verbal inspiration had a good deal to say for themselves. How true his instinct was ! Why, in a passage

of such supreme inspiration as this should we be curious? Why not recognise direct prefiguring of the Gospel, and be content?

The answer is that these further questions have been asked in our day; we cannot, except in moments of strong emotion, make as though we had never heard of them. And, having become sophisticated thus, we are aware that in the Christian use of the prophecy we may discover breadths and depths, by meditating on its whole history, which lie beneath the surface of theology. For, as these "Comfort ye" chapters repeat again and again with heartfelt conviction, the whole of history is alive with the one purpose of God. The Christ we worship is not merely Jesus of Nazareth. As in the ascended Christ the ages yet to come are gathered up and will be transformed, so also in the pre-existent Christ the ages past have been stages in His continuous manifestation. What we call "types" in the Old Testament are not just resemblances which stimulate thought; they are the one "Way, Truth and Life" shewing itself in men and events of the most various kind "by divers portions and in divers manners." Hence it is always desirable to recover the original, though as yet imperfect, intention of a

prophecy ; and even if we cannot recover it with certainty, the search itself is profitable. It is always a step towards a fuller comprehension of the mystery of the " One Christ taking manhood into God."

Let us then begin by looking at these four prophetic " Songs " one by one, defining as well as we can what particular thing is said in each, and tracing the connected progress of their whole thought.

In xlii. 1, the LORD speaks introducing His Servant. " Behold my servant, whom I uphold ; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth : I have put my spirit upon him ; he shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench : he shall bring forth judgement in truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgement in the earth ; and the isles shall wait for his law."

The Servant is to take salvation to the Gentiles, to the isles and coast lands of the Mediterranean, the " classical " peoples of Greece and Italy who are rising now into the dawn. Then to the same effect the LORD

addresses the Servant, giving him this commission. "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."

At xlix. 1, the Servant speaks. He tells of his commission. "Listen, O isles unto me; and hearken, ye peoples from afar: the LORD hath called me from the womb . . . in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me . . . and he said unto me, Thou art my servant; Israel, in whom I will be glorified." Then he confesses discouragement. "But I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and vanity: yet surely my judgement is with the LORD, and my recompense with my God." And in accordance with the trustfulness of the last words he goes on to tell how the LORD corrected his misgiving by reminding him of the large scope of his mission: at home, among his own people, there may be failure, but God's purpose is to be worked out on a wider field; he is to be the LORD's light to the Gentiles. "And now saith the LORD that formed me from

the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, and that Israel be gathered unto him . . . yea, he saith, It is too light a thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel : I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." It is evident from the concluding verses that the Servant is called " Israel " in some special sense ; the name does not mean that the whole nation is personified in " The Servant," since the lighter part of his duty is (what at first he seems to fail in) to bring back Israel to the LORD.

At l. 4, the Servant speaks again. He speaks of the happiness he finds in close communion with the LORD, communion as of a pupil with his master. " The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary : he wakeneth morning by morning he wakeneth mine ear to hear as they that are taught. The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away backward." For this last protestation there is too much reason. Discouragement has become persecution. " I gave my back to the

smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair : I hid not my face from shame and spitting.” But persecution has only confirmed him in this inner sense of God. “ For the Lord GOD will help me ; therefore have I not been confounded ; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me . . . Behold, the Lord GOD will help me.”

At the beginning of the fourth song (lii. 13) the LORD speaks again. “ Behold, my servant shall deal wisely, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. Like as many were astonished at thee . . . so shall he sprinkle many nations.” Something shocking is darkly hinted, yet victory is assured. That shocking deed is soon shewn plainly. At liii, 1, the persecutors, and with them, we may suppose, all the kings and nations to whom the LORD alluded, now speak. “ Who hath believed our report . . . He was despised and rejected of men ; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief . . . Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows : yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions . . . All we like sheep have gone astray . . . the LORD

hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." This is compunction ; and no wonder, for they have killed the Servant ; persecution has culminated in martyrdom. " For the transgression of my people "—the LORD breaks in upon their confession—" was he stricken. And they made his grave with the wicked . . . Although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth."

But the confession continues, rising to a great hope. For again the LORD takes up the word. " When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied : by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many : and he shall bear their iniquities." This life laid down in love is " indissoluble " (cf Hebrews vii. 16, R.V. margin). In the conversion of the enemies for whom he " made intercession " and died, the Servant shall be " perfected."

Thus the argument of the four songs is this : The Servant of the LORD a light to the Gentiles ; Discouraged by failure at home, he is re-assured by the wider scope of his mission ; Persecution

inspires him with a still more intimate consciousness of God ; He is martyred, and in losing life for his Lord's sake and his brethren he finds, with them, eternal life. Who was this Servant, thus in old time " made like unto the Son of God " ?

It has been thought that the prophet was picturing Jeremiah. And if the songs are accepted as an integral part of the prophecy of the exile, no suggestion could have more verisimilitude. Jeremiah was misunderstood in his earthly life as though he were an enemy of God. He was persecuted. We do not hear how his life ended, but we last see him still faithfully ministering to a very angry people, and nothing looks more likely than that his course should end in martyrdom. And then his tender beautiful character, more like our Lord's than any other in the Old Testament ; and the one defect in it, the quick fierce passion of a sensitive heart—compare Isaiah l. 8f with Jeremiah xv. 15, and then look on to verse 19, " If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth : they shall return unto thee but thou shalt not return unto them ; " the longer we contemplate Jeremiah's work and words, the more he seems to resemble the Servant.

And though he was “despised and rejected” during his ministry, he was valued afterwards. His promise, not “Isaiah’s,” is recalled by the Chronicler as fulfilled in the return from exile (2 Chron. xxxvi. 22). And in the vision of Maccabæus (2 Maccabees xv. 13f) there appeared “a man of venerable age and exceeding glory, and wonderful and most majestic was the dignity around him: and Onias answered and said, This is the lover of the brethren, he who prayeth much for the people and the holy city, Jeremiah the prophet of God.”

Or does this last quotation suggest a different background? Dr. Kennett thinks the Servant songs arose from the Maccabean struggle, and that the Servant himself is a lyrical figure for the band of Maccabean saints and martyrs. In England the Apocrypha are read so little that such an opinion hardly gets a fair hearing; we are apt to refuse it at once because we do not know enough about the story of the Maccabees to appreciate the reasons on which it is grounded. Anyone who does feel interested in it should read the very vivid history in 1 Maccabees i—vii, and if he also reads Mr. Bevan’s *Jerusalem under the High priests* he will certainly not

find his time mis-spent ; it is a narrative which is at least " as good as a novel."

In the year 168 B.C., the tyranny of Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, and overlord of the Jews, reached its height. He was determined to make all his subjects conform to Greek manners and religion. He proscribed the worship and the sacred books of the Jews, and compelled them to offer pagan sacrifices. The temple he defiled with his "abomination of desolation." Even among the Jews themselves he found many who were in sympathy with the Hellenic temper and would go far in the way of compromise. It seemed as though the true religion would perish undefended. But a priest named Mattathias, with Judas his son who was called Maccabæus, raised the standard of revolt. The other brothers of the family, and a little band of zealots for the Law, took to the hills. They gathered themselves into a small but growing army of "saints," of "covenanters." They fought, suffered, perished. But in three years they gained the victory ; recovered and purified the temple ; re-dedicated the altar.

This was a deliverance which no human prudence could have counted possible. We find accordingly that the Maccabeans were

enthusiasts. They formed a band of saints, close knit in faith, and separate from the timid or indifferent nation. They were "saints," "Chasidim," a term which presently became the recognised designation of their party. They counted the world well lost for God ; and their heart was in the promised Kingdom of God. The Book of Daniel was written to inspire them with religious courage, and with faith in a life to come beyond the grave ; that is clearly indicated in the book itself, whatever view be taken of the date at which it was written. In 1 Maccabees vii. 17 two verses are cited from Psalm lxxix. 2f, and it has been thought that this psalm was inspired by the hopes and sorrows of the struggle. Theodore of Mopsuestia in the fourth century had given reasons for reading many psalms as prophetic of the Maccabean times. His successors in criticism think some were actually composed then ; and any one who goes to the Psalter with the Maccabean story and the Maccabean temper fresh in his recollection will at least acknowledge that such a fancy is not unnatural. Is it unnatural to conjecture that the Servant Songs, or at any rate, the last and greatest of them, are also part of the literature which is connected with that heroic period ?

The suggestion seems to me acceptable. Only it may perhaps be questioned whether it is not rather a temper than a date that is indicated. The Maccabean temper appears in many persons and at many stages of Hebrew history. There was much of it in Isaiah. The Rechabites were a kind of Maccabean saints. The background of the Gospel—its daring, its renunciation, its “ Kingdom of God at hand ”—is strongly Maccabean. The roll of the heroes of the faith in Hebrews xi concludes exultingly with the Maccabees.

The date of Isaiah lii. 13—liii is most difficult to determine. It is certain that the theology of the passage is interfused with that other-worldly spirit which we observe so abundantly operating in the Maccabees that we may conveniently borrow a title for it from them. And yet the most remarkable point is that with all these particular characteristics, this Servant Song transcends the second century manifestation of that spirit. It is not mainly national, not militant; its ideal is the ideal of Christ's humility.

The theology of the four Songs may be summed up thus :

- (1) Great things through small ;
- (2) Enlargement through failure ;
- (3) Inspiration through suffering ;

all of which reminds us of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Then follows :

- (4) The One who dies for the many, yet finds life in their salvation ; the communion of saints established through martyrdom ; sacrifice and eternal life.

“ The communion of saints ” must be taken in the large sense of the New Testament. We have already seen a narrower communion of saints established by martyrdom. The zeal and suffering, whether of the actual Maccabeans or of heroes of the faith who bore like witness in other times, did bind “ the little flock ” together so that they became a band of brothers who stood over against the world, firm and happy in their participation of the Kingdom of God. But in Isaiah liii we see another kind of “ saints ” viz : the sinners and the persecutors who are now converted. And these have a more mysterious communion with the Servant. He has died but he is not dead. He is living a life which seems to be in some sense dependent on the use they make of his martyrdom, and

which is enriched in proportion as they also enter into it. But here are problems which must be considered in the light of the whole of the Old Testament doctrine of eternal life. To that we will return when we have prepared the way by a brief examination of the doctrine of suffering in the Old Testament, "the mystery of pain."

The first stage in this doctrine is expressed in Psalm xxxvii 23ff :

"A man's goings are established of the LORD ;
And he delighteth in his way.

Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast
down :

For the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

I have been young, and now am old ;

Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken,
Nor his seed begging their bread."

Except in a small primitive and undisturbed community the obvious objection to this would soon be raised : " You do see the righteous forsaken, and his seed begging their bread." This objection might be met in two ways, which diverge into two later developments of the general doctrine. First the answer of S. Clement of Alexandria might be returned : " You do not see this often, and when you do, it is because

no other righteous man is near." In Judaism, and in the Christian Church, this development took the practical form of almsgiving, the duty and blessedness of which is so strongly recommended in the Wisdom Books and in the Law.

But a second and less pleasing answer was also offered. It will be noticed that the Revised Version of Psalm xxxvii, quoted above, differs from the Prayer Book Version, slightly, but significantly. The Prayer Book has, "The LORD ordereth a good man's going," which narrows the broader conception of divine providence which the original Hebrew suggests. Perhaps this modification is a symptom of a cruel tendency which appears in all ages. At any rate it grew to be a dogma in popular Judaism that the righteous is indeed never forsaken, and if any one is observed to be suffering, he is suffering because he has sinned. This popular dogma appears in the Book of Job, which is mainly, or at least largely, a protest against it. Job suffers; the three friends urge him to confess the sin which must have caused the suffering. Job insists that he has not sinned, and that this doctrine is disproved by the terrible facts of life in general. And though Job brings so fierce an indictment against

what seems to be the providential misgovernment of the world, that we can hardly blame his friends for judging as they did, the LORD at the end of the discussion does blame them. He says they have not spoken of him the thing that is right, as his servant Job hath (xlii. 7).

But the discussion, the argument, is not the main thing in the Book of Job. If it were we should have to confess that little real light had been gained thereby; the cruel popular consciousness would have been rebuked, but as for the deep problem of pain all that could be said would be what is said at an early point in the book—wisdom is for God not for men; unto man all that is revealed is “Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding” (xxviii. 28). That, however, is not the last word of this great book. An attentive reader cannot fail to perceive in the speeches of Job that he has a more awful trouble than bodily pain, or the prospect of a dishonoured death. He is in anguish because his own communion with God seems to be broken off. That accounts for—perhaps the LORD thought it excused—his “mighty wind” of words. That is what the magnificent pictures which the LORD presents to him of the vast

divine care for universal nature are partly designed to meet. But the great thing is that at the end this communion is more than restored. " I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear ; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes " (xlii. 5f). This is not a logical solution of a problem ; it is the creation of an inner certainty. But it is an immense advance on the half-agnostic resignation of " wisdom is for God not for man." We might explain it by saying that Job after all had sin, if he had not sinned any particular sin. But that would be to miss the fuller sense. As in a work of art, a piece of music, the effect upon the soul comes in its own language and is marred if it is translated into the language of discourse, if it is moralised—that I suppose is the legitimate interpretation of the tag, " Art for art's sake "—so here : Job's " problem " is not solved in the language of problems, but the problem is taken up into a larger thought ; his communion with God comes to life, and he knows henceforth that all sorrow can become the joy of the peace that passeth understanding. The epilogue of course does tell of recompense. But that is an epilogue ; Job's peace preceded the recompense ; the

transformation not the removal of pain is shewn to be the essential thing.

That is as far as the Old Testament carries us so long as the question remains, "How can I find the consolation which overcomes pain?" But Isaiah liii carries us farther. This prophetic poem was prepared for by some period of martyrdom. Out of that wide-spread suffering, but also heroism, this lyric sprang in which the newly discovered secret is concentrated into a story as of one particular person. Martyrdom means that men lay down their lives for a cause, a friend, a master. They love, and they forget themselves. They ask no longer, "How can I find consolation?" and the all powerful secret which they thus discover is the one which our LORD declared "with the perfection of ultimate utterance"—"Whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it." This is an absolute turning of sorrow into joy. The spirit in which alone it is possible is from above. The discovery is revelation. "We love, because he first loved us" (1 John iv. 19, R.V.)

The expression of a revelation is, however, generally aided by secondary causes. And as

Jeremiah's New Covenant may be thought to have prepared for the "Comfort ye" prophecy, so Ezekiel's doctrine of sacrifice might seem to have contributed to the production of Isaiah liii. Ezekiel stands contrasted with Jeremiah and the earlier prophets in that, while they were indifferent or even opposed to sacrifices, he made much of them. If they were puritans, he was a ritualist. When Jerusalem fell, he, taught by God, prepared for its rebuilding, and the new life of the Return. He seems to say, "We have learned from my predecessors the idealists; now we will make their idealism practical by laws and regulations for the conduct of the state and for worship." The last nine chapters of his book read like a first sketch of Leviticus. And, as in Leviticus, many rules are given for sacrifice. He takes up the ancient rites, which had been horribly corrupted by Canaanitish superstition, purifies and restores them on a higher plane. The mere ritual reformation was but for a time. His sacrificial doctrine is the Johannine doctrine of the cleansing Blood of Christ; it leads to the Cross, as Jeremiah and the "Comfort ye" prophecy lead to the theology of "The Prodigal Son"; so variously interwoven is Gospel truth. But it

leads to the Cross through the Servant poem. The words in liii. 10, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin," are so frequently considered to be a hopeless corruption of the lost original text, that we dare not press the sacrificial allusion they contain. That matters little. Not one particular word but the whole context is what really signifies. If we read that whole context, and try to put its meaning into a single phrase, and then hear the word "sacrifice" pronounced, who does not recognise that the key note has been given? The problem of suffering is here solved by the doctrine of sacrifice; which is, love in action.

And now to come back to the subject we just touched and left a few minutes ago. The doctrine of sacrifice also lightens the shadow of death. What is the teaching of the Old Testament in general, and of this passage in particular, on eternal life?

We should distinguish "eternal life" from all sub-divisions of the idea, such as "immortality of the soul," "resurrection of the body," "another life beyond the grave." The last phrase is perhaps actually misleading. The other two express beliefs which may be found here or there in the Old Testament, but

which are certainly not characteristic of it. But wherever the Old Testament writers are uttering their own faith in the true religion, they do appear to believe in "eternal life." This has been disputed, but has not the dispute arisen either from confusing "eternal life" with one or other of the more narrowly defined conceptions, or from forgetting that familiar speech often disguises real beliefs? We speak of those who have died as being "dead" though we do not mean that; and we, like some Psalmists, do sometimes, in the stress of sorrow, fall into the language of men without hope, though our hope has not really departed.

There is, indeed, as we shall see in a moment, progress in this Old Testament faith, and the clearness of the faith is often obscured by the hostile influences which nevertheless do themselves afford impulse to the progress. Yet it may almost be said that the doctrine of eternal life remains always the same; wherever and whenever men believe in the Living God they necessarily believe also in eternal life. Our Lord rehearsed the doctrine when He quoted Exodus iii. 6; in Luke xx. 37, the quotation is pointed by the concluding comment "But that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed

when he calleth the LORD the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now he is not the God of the dead, but of the living : for all live unto him.” “ Even Moses ” ; our Lord said that, because He was answering Sadducees who appealed to the bare Law against the later addition of Prophets or Writings. But we might press farther back still, and say that, if the narrative of Abraham and the patriarchs indicate any thing like history at all, this belief is as really brought out there as anything else is, viz : that all these believers in God believed that in God they lived, and that, “ when we die we go to Him, and that is enough.”

That is what I mean by the doctrine of eternal life. It is a doctrine which can be discerned even when not uttered. Isaiah says little indeed about it, but who can enter sympathetically upon the life of Isaiah and suppose that he would have spoken of death as Hezekiah did ? The idea may be expressed in a vague fashion ; as in Ecclesiastes xii. 7, “ Or ever . . . the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit return unto God who gave it.” This may be but the hard won, imperfect victory of a much tried faith. Yet the words are very near those words of a psalm which our LORD himself

used as His last prayer : “ Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” The appeal to His Father does indeed lift the doctrine higher ; so in another way did His resurrection—“ He abolished death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel ” (2 Timothy i. 10). Yet the doctrine in its purity had always been a high one.

It must however, be admitted that the doctrine is not always presented quite purely in the Old Testament. It had to contend with grave perversions ; these perversions sometimes affected the inspired writers themselves in thought as well as in words ; they caused the mass of the people to go quite astray. The great disturbing influence was the belief in “ Sheol ” which Israel inherited from pagan ancestors or took from pagan neighbours. Sheol, or hell, as it is translated in our Authorised Version, was thought to be the place where, after death, men lived a shadowy life out of reach of the love of God. The prophets insisted on the truth that the LORD ruled as God everywhere. Therefore there could be no place or state where His care for men entered not ; Sheol was a vain imagination. Every now and then they would condescend to employ the popular language to

give force to their rhetoric, somewhat as Milton uses the names of the heathen gods, mythologically rather than theologically. But for the most part they set their faces so sternly against the whole superstition that they even abstained from allowing life beyond the grave any place in their teaching. To illustrate from a modern parallel again, they resembled the Puritans who, to check superstitious dogmatism, avoided all mention of the blessed dead in prayer.

But the conflict of beliefs operated also in another way. It raised questions, and compelled people to define more carefully what they did believe if they rejected Sheol. Thus in the Book of Job we find on the one hand the dark fancies about Sheol tormenting Job in his bodily weakness and spiritual perplexity. But at one point a flash of hope is struck out in the clash of controversy. He can no longer be content with, "I go to God and that is enough." The cruel accusations of his friends force him to an intense desire for vindication, and if that cannot be before death, then it must come after death, and he must be fully conscious of it. So he bursts out in xix. 25ff, with the famous words, "But I know that my redeemer liveth, &c., " The Hebrew here is "Goel." In the

margin of the Revised Version it is translated "vindicator." It is a strong, almost fierce word, standing sometimes for "the avenger of blood." In the lightning flash of storm the truth, which will be known later as the Christian resurrection, is obscurely shewn.

But this is a step towards the unveiling of more clearly defined truth. Another such step is made in one of those "apocalyptic" passages associated with Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah xxvi. 19: "Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the dead." Here indeed is "resurrection," but poetically figured, not a clear-cut dogma. In Daniel xii the clear-cut dogma does appear. "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine

as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Here is resurrection, at the last day, dogmatically proclaimed. Yet the proclamation needed to be widened and corrected before it could become part of the Gospel of our Lord. It is beset with national limits. There is a fearful zeal about it which make us think of that terrible conclusion to the Book of Isaiah ; so terrible that the Jews have a rubric in their Bible bidding the reader repeat the preceding verse and so end on its more evangelic note. The passage in Daniel is an advance on " the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob," but it would not have served our Lord so well in His argument for eternal life.

What He taught, and what He proved by His resurrection, is a larger truth, a present as well as a future comfort, including the communion of saints now as well as the resurrection of the body hereafter. The Old Testament developments which we have been tracing move on the narrower lines of " life beyond the grave." But the doctrine of sacrifice in Isaiah liii runs out into the Johannine doctrine of eternal life, one and unbroken, in God who is Love. The other conception depends for its expression on

analogies of material existence, and is (as experience proves) ever liable to be impoverished by these analogies. This faith must be meditated upon spiritually or not at all. Hence it has power to overleap the confines of time and space, to transform partings, and to find enrichment in the sharpest trials to which pure love can be exposed.

It may be objected that we are reading too much into the prophecy. Is not the Servant what the early Jewish commentators understood, a figure representing not one particular person, but the company of martyred saints, "the ideal Israel?" If so, the renewed, glorified life of the nation was the idea in the mind of the author; "eternal life" is a proper development, but not the original thought. This objection must not be put lightly aside. The strong impression many receive in reading the poem, as of a particular person, may be due to the poetical skill and fire of the author; for it is the genius of a "lyric" to produce just that impression. But our defence would be that the manner in which sacrifice, atonement, intercession are here spoken of do compel us to recognise the most profound inspiration. And the thought of larger diviner life through sacrifice

is the complement of these other thoughts. Not the vivid picture of the Servant, but the grandeur of the whole theology has led us to our bolder interpretation of the passage.

It is bold ; for even though it may be shewn, as it surely may, that the resurrection of the dead was part of the faith of the Jewish Church before the time of our Lord, still that resurrection was expected as part of the wonder of the "last days." But here the hope is not apocalyptic ; it is of a life which shall be now. Nevertheless, I believe we may hold to our venture. If any prophecy is in advance of contemporary thought, this prophecy is. And its very difficulty and obscurity is in our favour. As in other places we have noticed, so here ; a new thought is being expressed in language which has not yet attained to clearness. Presently other teachers will follow who will say plainly what is here said tentatively. Then, presently again, this will be hardened into a dogma. Both those stages still lie beyond the horizon of the author of the "Servant prophecy."

A note may be added on the connexion of the Servant Songs with the New Testament and early Christian thought.

The name "Servant" is a very early designation of our Lord. It seems to have been a favourite term in worship. Thus we find it in Acts iv. 27-30, and in the liturgical passages of S. Clement of Rome, and the Didache ; so too in S. Peter's sermon in Solomon's Porch (Acts iii. 13 R.V.).

In Galatians i. 15, S. Paul finds encouragement in applying Isaiah xlix to himself. We take the two passages as morning lessons on the Feast of the Conversion of S. Paul.

Isaiah liii was the passage which, interpreted by S. Philip, led to the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts viii). In 1 Peter ii. 22ff it is quoted at length, and of all Old Testament passages it seems to have been the one which especially served to open the mind of the apostolic Church to the meaning of the death of Christ. Compare also the citation in Matthew xii. 17ff from the first Servant Song, Isaiah xlii. 1-3, and the frequent allusions to our Lord's "bearing" or "taking away" sin, as in Isaiah liii. 4, 6, 12.

Canon Box kindly allows me to quote this answer to some questions put to him on the subject.

"The Jewish evidence that is pre-Christian all points, I think, in the direction of inter-

preting Isaiah liii in a collective sense. In Daniel xii. 3 ("they that turn many to righteousness") there seems to be a clear allusion to Isaiah liii. 11 "by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many," and there the Servant is apparently identified with those faithful teachers of the Law who amid trial and persecution, and even martyrdom, are loyal to the true religion in their teaching. In the Book of Wisdom there are several allusions to Isaiah liii, especially in the description of the righteous man who suffers persecution. But the "righteous one" in this book is a collective designation of the pious of all ages.

The earlier Servant Songs had been interpreted in a Messianic sense in pre-Christian times. Thus Psalms of Solomon xviii contains clear allusions to Isaiah xlii. 4 ("He shall not fail nor be discouraged"), which it applies to the Messiah; thus interpreting the passage in the sense given to it by the Targum, which renders 'Behold my servant the Messiah.' 'The Elect One' as a Messianic title in the Similitudes of the Book of Enoch also

implies the same interpretation. But no pre-Christian evidence known to me interprets Isaiah liii in a personal Messianic sense, and I find it difficult to believe that such existed.

At the same time the way had been prepared for such an interpretation by the Messianic exegesis of the earlier Songs, and, when the event suggested it to them, the early disciples naturally accepted it eagerly. I suppose it really goes back to the mind of our Lord."

Books for the Study of Isaiah.

I. HISTORY CRITICISM, INTERPRETATION.

A. FIRST STAGE OF CRITICISM ; BROAD LINES, LITTLE DETAIL.

- A. P. Stanley. "Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church." 3 vols. Isaiah in Vol. II. Murray, 1862.

The noble style and spiritual insight rouse enthusiasm for the subject.

B. SECOND STAGE ; ANALYSIS MORE DETAILED ; ILLUSTRATIONS FROM ASSYRIAN DOCUMENTS.

- W. Robertson Smith. "The Prophets of Israel." Black, 1882.

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- S. R. Driver. "Isaiah, His Life and Times." 2s. 6d. Griffiths.

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- G. Adam Smith. "Isaiah" in the Expositor's Bible. 2 vols. 7s. 6d. each. Hodder & Stoughton.

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- J. Skinner. "Isaiah" in the "Cambridge Bible for Schools." 2 vols. 4s. each.

A plain commentary for English readers which the best scholars will also appreciate.

- O. C. Whitehouse. "Isaiah" in the "Century Bible." 2 vols. 2s. 6d. each.

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C. THIRD STAGE ; FROM POINT OF VIEW OF THE JEWISH CHURCH AFTER THE EXILE.

- R. H. Kennett. "The Composition of the Book of Isaiah, Schweich Lectures for 1909." 3s. Frowde for British Academy.

Learned, vigorous, interesting to all kinds of readers : much of the Book is assigned to the Maccabean period.

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D. A SELECTION FROM DR. CHEYNE'S WORKS.

"The Prophecies of Isaiah." 2 vols. 25s. Paul, Trench & Trübner.

"Introduction to the Book of Isaiah." 24s. Black.

"Jewish Religious Life after the Exile." 6s. Putnam.

"The Mines of Isaiah Re-explored." 5s. Black.

Article *Isaiah* in "Encyclopædia Biblica."

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II. THEOLOGY, &c.

F. D. Maurice. "The Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament." 3s. 6d. Macmillan.

It is difficult to recommend a book which shall defend the unity of authorship throughout the Book of Isaiah. Few of the conservatives can enter sympathetically upon the arguments of the critics. Maurice did so enter, yet decided on the whole against them. These sermons have of course the great positive qualities of his theology.

A. B. Davidson. "The Theology of the Old Testament." 12s. T. & T. Clark.

"Old Testament Prophecy." 10s. 6d. T. & T. Clark.

Article "Prophecy and Prophets" in "Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible."

A. B. Davidson was cautious as a critic, but enriched his theological writings with the masculine philosophy of a Scotsman. All who read him love him. The article in "Hastings" is very grand.

A. F. Kirkpatrick. "The Doctrine of the Prophets." 6s. Macmillan.

Sober, lucid, scholarly. Dr. Kirkpatrick reassures by his reverent presentment of a moderate criticism those who are startled by its novelty.

W. H. Bennett. "The Religion of the Post-exilic Prophets." 6s.
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A useful book : the work of a kindly and most real scholar.

S. R. Driver. "The Ideals of the Prophets." 3s. 6d. T. & T. Clark.

Published after Dr. Driver's death : a series of sermons which, read in order, form a sketch of the history of Israel from Isaiah to the Maccabees, and show Christ fulfilling but surpassing the ideals of the prophets.

H. F. Hamilton. "The People of God." 2 vols. Vol. 1, Israel.
Oxford University Press. 18s.

"Discovery and Revelation." 2s. 6d. Longmans.

A remarkable treatise on the visible unity of the Church as purposed by God. The first volume prepares the ground by its powerful argument for the unique character of the revelation given to Israel. But more important still is the masterly analysis of the prophetic "call." The smaller book is a brief restatement of the first volume of the larger book, and is sufficient for the general reader.

A. S. Peake. "The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament."
Bryant. 2s. 6d.

Valuable for the Servant Songs.

III. GENERAL INTRODUCTIONS TO THE OLD TESTAMENT, &c.

S. R. Driver. "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament." 9th edition. 12s. T. & T. Clark.

This must be used in the last, the 9th edition, and is all but indispensable for serious study.

G. H. Box. "A Short Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament." 1s. Rivingtons.

Yet this little book is so excellent that it might suffice for those who can spare but little time or money.

Rogers. "Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament. Translated and edited by R. W. Rogers." 12s. Oxford University Press.

A complete and trustworthy collection : invaluable for the illustration of the history.

Buchanan Gray. "The Forms of Hebrew Poetry considered with special reference to the Criticism and Interpretation of the Old Testament." 7s. 6d. Hodder & Stoughton.

The older prophets wrote or spoke in poetic style and rhythm, and the Book of Isaiah is rhythmical poetry throughout. This, the latest treatise on the subject, helps us to appreciate the character and significance of the style.

G. Adam Smith. "The Historical Geography of the Holy Land." Hodder & Stoughton.

The first hundred pages of this book should be read by all who would enter sympathetically into the highland genius of the prophets of Israel.

G. Adam Smith and J. G. Bartholomew. "Atlas of the Historical Geography of the Holy Land." 25s. Hodder & Stoughton.

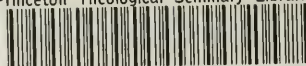
This Atlas, recently published, is a collection of magnificent maps. Aided by these, the imagination fills the geographical allusions in Isaiah with the vividness of a picture.

IV. OTHER BOOKS.

Only English books have been mentioned in this list, but English scholars have always recognised their membership in the republic of letters; and, especially, have worked for half a century in amity with the Germans, an amity so unhappily disturbed to-day. English writers have been generally critical of novelty, with a genius for selection and interpretation. Thus Stanley interpreted Ewald, whose *Geschichte des Volkes Israel and Propheten des alten Bundes* (both have been translated into English) were full of the idealism which was the glory of the older German scholarship; the title of our second lecture is taken from him. Ewald was the first teacher of Cheyne, who says that he owed to him "the example of a mild yet fervent Johannine religion, and a Pauline love of the Scriptures." When Robertson Smith wrote, Graf, the Dutch scholar Kuenen, and finally Wellhausen, had brought new freedom to the study of the prophets by demonstrating that the completed Levitical Law did not enter effectively into the life of Israel before the Exile. That demonstration was summed up in the Wellhausen's *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*. The *Prolegomena* were translated into English, and published, together with his article Israel, by A. and C. Black, in 1885. In recent times the study of Isaiah entered upon a new stage with the Commentaries of Duhm and Marti. The problems which may be gathered under the general heading of "Messianic" have been set in an altogether larger light by Gunkel and Gressmann. Mr. Box acknowledges particular obligation to Gressmann's *Ursprung der israelitisch-judischen Eschatologie*.

A word may be added about the text in which Isaiah should be read. Textual criticism of the Old Testament is not, perhaps never can be, scientifically based on ample evidence of documents, as in the New Testament. Therefore the ordinary "Massoretic" text of the Hebrew Bible, or the fine translation of that text in our Revised Version, is the safest to work from. Kittel's edition of it in the Hebrew with its brief critical apparatus is also exceedingly useful. And Cheyne's Hebrew text in *The Sacred Books of the Old Testament*, or his English translation of it in the *Polychrome Bible* may be recommended. Both indicate the analysis of sources. Yet no such analysis can be quite certain, and the caution is always necessary against being lulled into a false security by the blind acceptance of fixed "results," however honourable the name that recommends them. On the other hand that was a right exhortation to personal labour which the professor gave his class: "Sirs, have you a Septuagint? If not, sell all that you have, and buy a Septuagint for yourselves."

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